New Statesman

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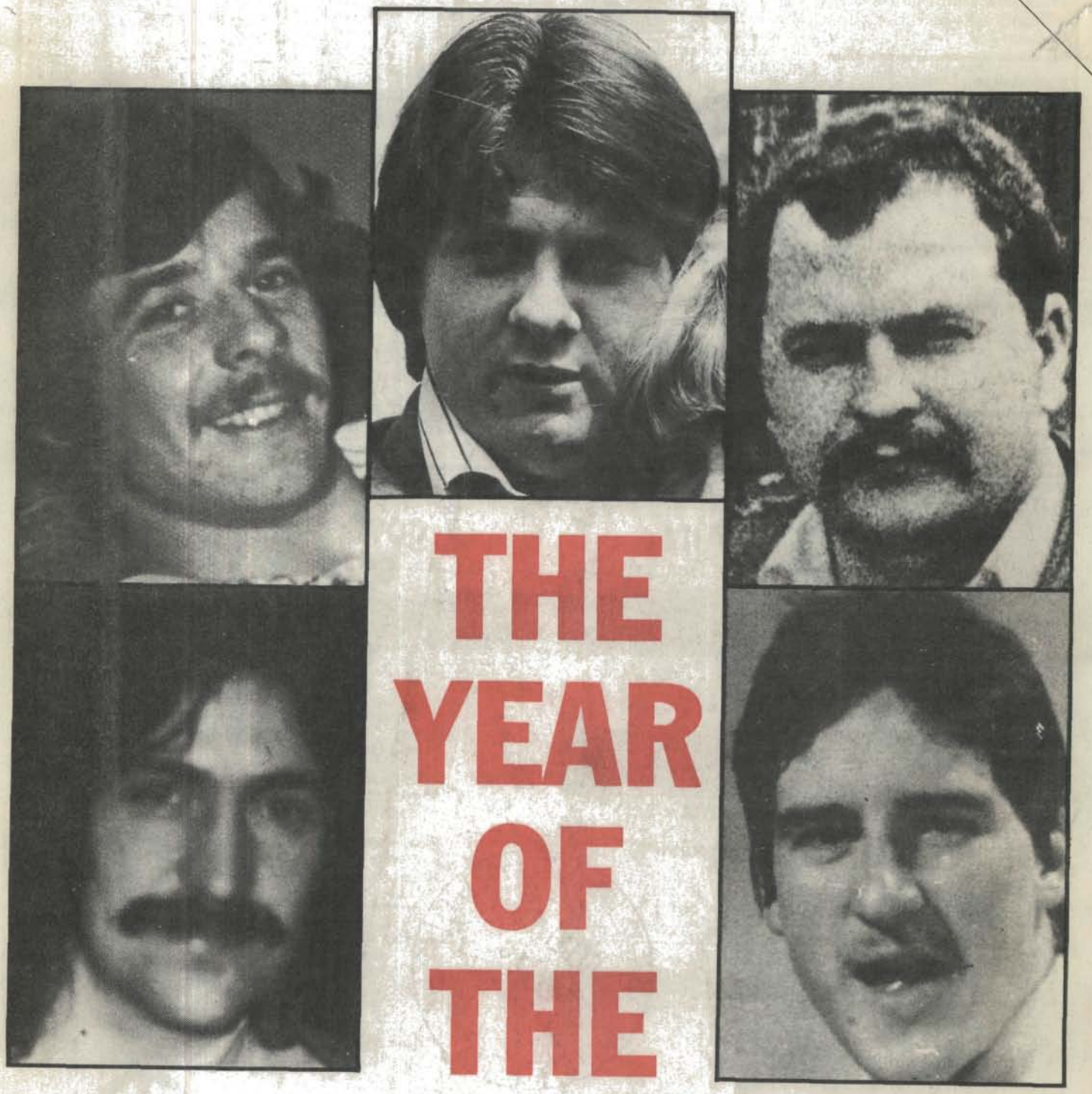

THE YEAR OF THE SUPERGRASS

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New Statesman

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P.S. Where will you be on October 22nd?

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New Statesman Vol 106 No 2740 23 September 1983

Centre party politics

TWO DOWN and two to go. We are now half way through the 1983 party conference season. The first set of conferences after a general election are important because they set the new political agenda for the next four or five years. As the Liberals leave Harrogate, they must be reflecting that as a party they are very much better placed now than their Alliance partners, the SDP.

It is true that the Liberal Party has only 17 MPs (though that total is already by far their best for decades). At the grass roots, though, the Liberals have built up a substantial position in the twelve years since 1970, when the party adopted the strategy of 'community policies' as its future style. The 1,950 odd Liberal local authority councillors up and down the country are a better reflection of the Liberal base now established in this country than the 17 members of the House of Commons.

In fact in some ways the Liberal Party (or at least its younger, lefter and more active wing) has shown itself at Harrogate to be rather closer to the Labour Party than to its formal SDP alliance partner. Indeed, the general impact of Harrogate was to strengthen the impression of the previous week's politicking in Salford – namely that the Social Democrat leadership (above all David Owen personally) is searching for a distinct and independent position which does not exist.

Put at its simplest, if the Liberal-SDP Alliance (or its component parts separately) is to make further political advance over the next four to five years, it must convert voting support that at present is still with the Tory or Labour Parties; or it must generate a sense of political crusade that will bring back into politics on its side the millions of voters who have simply opted out of active politics (and even out of voting) over the past fifteen years. To achieve this, it will have to develop new policies and political strategies and a new style of political leadership in tune with the mass requirements of the late 1980s and beyond. (This is precisely the same challenge that faces the Labour Party if it is to recover from the catastrophe that culminated in the 1983 general election.)

THE BASIS for such a strategy cannot be an attempt to outdo Thatcherism by invoking the wonders of the free market economy, or the worth of an independent British nuclear deterrent and the importance of cruise missiles. For what it is worth, Mrs Thatcher holds that political ground and is unlikely to be dislodged. It must depend on developing a political alternative to Thatcherism. And here, from a non-socialist perspective, the Liberals are quite simply already much better placed to produce effective ideas than the SDP. Indeed, such significant new ideas as have emerged from the Alliance – for example on proportional representation or reform of the British constitution – have emerged from *joint* Liberal-SDP study commissions. For the rest – as dramatically this week at Harrogate over Northern Ireland – it is the Liberal Party that shows the real signs of producing mould-breaking political initiatives.

From Harrogate two clear Liberal attitudes towards the SDP emerged. The first was towards the SDP rank and file and was essentially that the sooner and closer the two parties got together, the better it would be for the prospects of the 'middle party'. Liberals seem to have found the experience of working on the ground with SDP members easy enough and reasonably rewarding.

The second attitude was towards the SDP leadership. This could at best be described as an attitude of armed and distrustful neutrality. In fact at some of the fringe events Ken Livingstone (in town to canvass support for the continued existence of the Greater London Council) seemed to get a warmer reception than some of the SDP's own political ambassadors.

These two attitudes on the part of Liberals are a reflection of the reality of the political situation that has emerged in the last two weeks at Salford and Harrogate. It boils down to this. The Liberal Party is now better established than at any time since the war on the centre ground of British politics. If there is any reason for the continued existence of the SDP as another separate party operating in the centre ground between the Tory and Labour parties, it can only be because it is putting forward the claim that it represents some distinct political philosophy, or represents some distinct interest group.

For all the semantic efforts of David Owen and others, no such clear distinction has emerged. At one stage, the SDP's political theorists, like David Marquand, tried to pretend that the SDP was fundamentally different from the Liberals because it came originally out of a collectivist tradition of the Left; while the Liberal Party's intellectual roots were in anarchism, individualism and Gladstonian laisser faire. But now the SDP leadership strenuously denies that today's 'social democracy' draws anything from its socialist origins as it seeks the soft underbelly of the Thatcherite vote. And, in any case, the distinction never added up to much more than words in the first place.

The truth is that the instincts of the Liberal and SDP rank and file are certainly correct. There is room for *one* party of the centre, but not two. The group that will be left out in the political cold, if it does not come to terms with this fact, is the new national leadership of the SDP. And David Steel, himself, could easily become a Liberal casualty, if he persists in squandering his own personal political capital in making unilateral concessions to Dr Owen's political *amour propre*. Steel beat off the challenge to his personal authority that this time half hid behind the political bulk of Cyril Smith. He was helped all summer by the fact that the Liberal Party at present has no credible alternative to him as leader. But political leaders who persist in thinking that they can do what they like because they are indispensable sooner or later find out that they are not. □

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Who's who in the anti-Steel camp

WHEN THE SDP/Liberal Alliance was first debated at a Liberal Assembly in Llandudno two years ago a mere 113 delegates voted against giving David Steel a mandate to cement relations with the new party. Next morning, 500 badges were sold bearing the message: 'I'm one of the 113'. This week at Harrogate it became clear that three distinct groups in the Liberal Party are organising to oppose his personal alliance with David Owen.

The Association of Liberal Councillors actually favour 'organic merger' with the SDP, but they do so in the belief that the SDP is generally weak in the constituencies and will probably be swallowed by Liberal activists before the next election.

Steel opened his Assembly campaign to bring the party to heel with a further attack on the ALC's secretary Mr Tony Greaves who he earlier said should be dismissed. The ALC says Greaves has 2,000 members who make up the bulk of the Liberal's campaigning strength.

Even more formidable is the grouping headed by the new Liberal MP for Leeds West, Michael Meadowcroft. Meadowcroft sees the Alliance as no more than an electoral pact to offset the problems of small parties faced with a first-past-the-post electoral system.

He told a fringe meeting at the SDP Conference last week that he had won his seat by using Liberal rather than Alliance policy and making no mention of the SDP in his literature. He went on to warn that he would probably do the same again at the next election and said that the party's candidate in Chelmsford, Stuart Mole, believed that he had failed to win the seat from Norman St John Stevas by 378 votes through fighting on Alliance rather than Liberal policy.

For Meadowcroft, the Liberal Party is distinct because it is the true guardian of Britain's radical, dissenting tradition. He told SDP members at Salford that Liberals had much in common with the left wing of the Labour Party on social and human rights issues, and that the SDP did not. He is booked to debate 'the politics of the Left' with Tony Benn late at a fringe meeting at Harrogate. The number of CND badges in Harrogate this week show another grouping out of sympathy with joint Alliance policy.

Then there is the 'wet-look' represented by three MPs – Cyril Smith, David Alton and Simon Hughes. They accept much of Meadowcroft's analysis although they find the tactical issues more pressing. This grouping is the one which, in the short term, threatens Owen and Steel with the most embarrassment. Smith said on Monday that meetings between the two parties should take place in the constituencies within the next six weeks to see if agreement could be reached on local seat allocations. This is diametrically opposed to the SDP's belief that such negotiations should be handled regionally and nationally.

John Hatton

Black youth worker wins case — again

A MOSS SIDE community leader has won his appeal against a public order conviction brought by the police – for the second time in a year.

Last week an Appeal Court Judge in Manchester upheld an appeal by Hartley Hanley, a black youth worker who had been convicted of obstructing the police last March. He had been arrested after an incident in the Moss Side shopping precinct, when he and a fellow worker were called in from the nearby Hideaway Youth Club when the police tried to arrest a black man on a drugs charge. An angry crowd of youths had gathered and Hanley said he was trying to calm things down.

After a scuffle four men were arrested and taken to Moss Side Police Station, where Hanley alleges he was hit so hard in the face that he nearly lost the sight of one eye.

Commenting on the case in court last week, the Judge, Basil Gerrard, said he was 'surprised' that Hanley had been arrested at all. Furthermore, after hearing the evidence, he said it was clear that none of the officers involved thought he was guilty of obstructing them. He said that to have charged Hanley three months later was 'putting the knife in, when there was no need to have done so at all.' He quashed the conviction and ordered the authorities to pay the defence costs.

Hanley's previous successful appeal last October followed another conviction for causing a breach of the peace during the Moss Side disturbances in the summer of 1981, when he had apparently again been trying to act as peacemaker. The court accepted the facts as he put them and quashed a two month suspended jail sentence.

After last week's verdict Hanley said he was 'delighted' to have cleared his name, although he believed the police were out 'to get him on something'. He has been arrested on a number of other occasions, but the police have failed to press charges. Greater Manchester Police confirmed that a complaint by Hanley is to be investigated.

Both these incidents reflect a growing disquiet in Manchester about the way the police view the youth work service – and particularly its black workers. After the Moss Side precinct incident last year the AGM of NALGO's Manchester branch passed a resolution calling for the charges against the four men to be dropped, and expressing 'support for all members of the Moss Side community who are attempting to build a fair and equal society for both white and black'. Greater Manchester Council's Police Committee is setting up a working party to look into the issue of youth workers and the police.

'The police are unable to recognise the real causes of young people's behaviour and so try and make youth workers the scapegoats', said one youth worker. 'But the reality is that youth workers can provide the bridge between young blacks and society'.

Caroline Grist

Young Tories to attack gay rights

YOUNG CONSERVATIVES appear determined to undermine the role and funds of the British Youth Council. At the Council's AGM, to be held in Sheffield this weekend, Young Tories will try to portray the BYC as an unrepresentative Left-dominated organisation. The BYC now represents more than 60 youth organisations ranging from the Scouts and Guides, through the churches and young farmers to the National Association of Youth Clubs and the Scottish TUC youth committee, as well as the party political youth organisations.

The Council started its life as little more than a travel agency for the next generation of rising politicians, but since the late '70s it has developed more and more of a representational role. Its meetings have ceased to be dominated by professional youth workers and the staff of organisations and are now almost entirely made up of young people elected by the members themselves.

The wide range of membership has meant that the Council has had to steer a difficult course between controversy and consensus, but under pressure largely from the non-political youth organisations the Council has been highly critical of the Youth Training Scheme. It has argued for higher allowances, a greater educational content including political education and representation of the trainees themselves within the Scheme. It has avoided a huge split over unilateral disarmament by supporting a nuclear freeze, but has made itself unpopular with the new Thatcherite leadership of the Young Conservatives with support for sex education and the right 'to determine one's own gay sexuality.'

The BYC is extremely vulnerable to Young Conservative attacks as almost all its funds come from government. Young Conservatives appear to be going out of their way to ensure they are not part of a consensus leadership. They are standing a large number of almost unknown candidates knowing they have little chance of being elected. Indeed sources within the Young Conservatives have let it be known that they won't even be voting themselves for all their candidates. Nick Moore, a current and popular YC member of the BYC executive, has been told by Phil Pedley, YC Chairman, that he cannot stand for Treasurer. Moore, a wet, would almost certainly have been elected. Their manifestos declare: 'The BYC is in danger of becoming a carbon copy of the Labour Party, and 'On an executive which shows such a heavy bias to the left wing even in so-called non-political places, it is essential that moderates are elected.' The non-politicals will not see this as a friendly statement.

The Young Conservatives have also inundated the council with aggressively Thatcherite motions. Their policy on YTS is limited to calling for the creation of small businesses by ex-trainees and on trade unions they want total support for Norman Tebbit. But perhaps most typical is their position on 'Morals', which seeks to instruct the Council to 'promote the virtues of the nuclear family and that it does not repeat its recent tendency to publicise and give support to homosexuality and any other form of sexual deviation.'

If, as is very likely, both their candidates and motions fail, young Tories will probably then attack the Council as unrepresentative because dominated by the Left. In the eyes of Sir Keith Joseph and Sir Geoffrey Howe, the BYC will then have forfeited any right to public money.

Tony White

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British colonel attacks Berlin 'radicals' as enemy

A SENIOR British military officer in West Berlin has attacked the German radical movement, describing it as 'the enemy from within'. Colonel Hordern, the British Chief of Staff, said last week that the nine 'Alternative List' candidates elected to West Berlin's parliament in May 1981 'are undermining what we are trying to do. They are a disrupting factor and disrupt the administration of Berlin.'

West Berlin is not legally part of the Federal Republic of Germany and is still technically under the joint administration of the British, French and Americans, although day-to-day government is carried out by an elected parliament. The usual West German political parties are represented – the Conservative CDU party took power in 1981 – including the equivalent of the Greens, a coalition of peace groups and radicals called the Alternative List.

Hordern's comments, made to an Anglo-German conference on East-West relations, caused intense embarrassment to the British government's civilian representative who publicly disagreed with him on the same platform.

David Wyatt, the most senior British civil servant in West Berlin, interrupted when the Colonel was asked what right he had to criticise democratically elected representatives of the Berlin people. He said that Hordern had been expressing his personal opinion and that he personally disagreed with him. He was dismayed that some of the people of West Berlin supported the Alternative List, but nevertheless welcomed their representation in the city's parliament.

Hordern had been accounting for the Allied forces in the city – the equivalent of a division – and the need to maintain strength in order to deter Warsaw Pact forces in peace time, but went on:

> In the long term we are more concerned with the enemy from within. They [the Alternative List representatives] question the need for an Allied division. Some naively believe that a token military presence is all that is necessary.

Wyatt only realised the possible implications of Hordern's lack of tact when a junior civil servant told him there were journalists in the audience. He then said: 'I would take it very much amiss if any of this were reported in the media.'

Col. Hordern's remarks are especially embarrassing as the 'hot autumn' of protest against American cruise missiles in West Germany looms up. Peace demonstrations in West Berlin are deeply irritating to the military, particularly because they take place in full view of East German and Russian soldiers. 'They are doing nothing but supporting the other side,' said Col. Hordern.

John Rentoul

foto Graf

Police violence Italian-style

Sicilian police erupted in violence on 8 August when they decided to break up the blockade of peace protesters outside the Comiso site for cruise missiles. Despite press reports that the protesters had provoked the violence, photographs reveal that the atmosphere was calm until the sudden police charge, during which injuries were inflicted on protesters by, among other things, a whip and the wooden handles of police batons. A letter of protest about the police violence is to be handed in to the Italian embassy in London next Monday at 12.30pm.

Ben Hollis

MISCELLANY

Cult of the Doctor

The David Owen cult is spreading uncontrollably, with everyone from the *Guardian* to the *Daily Express* saying what a splendid chap he is – mature, responsible, statesmanlike (or, in other words, right-wing). Even Mrs Thatcher has succumbed. At a recent Downing Street lunch she was asked who she thought would be the next non-Conservative Prime Minister. Without hesitation she replied: 'David Owen.' After the briefest of pauses, she then added: 'But not until the year 2000.' Oh well.

Polls draw closer

Neil Kinnock's speech to Europe's socialist Euro-MPs in Strasbourg last week received wide coverage for the leader-in-waiting's decision to revise Labour policy towards the Common Market. Less noticed was another even greater break with hallowed Labour tradition. At the press conference following his speech he was asked to comment on that morning's Gallup Poll in the *Daily Telegraph* putting Labour in third place. Past Labour leaders to a man would have responded with a ritual denunciation of polls, pollsters and right-wing papers. Not Kinnock. He said he believed polls, thought Gallup was probably accurate, and that Labour had a lot to do to improve its rating. We thought Kinnock would land himself in yet more trouble with the Left until we saw this month's newsletter from Harris Research Centre – the outfit that conducts the Tories' private polls. There, writing favourably about Harris, was the man without whom no list of Fleet Street's demons would be complete: Ken Livingstone. Ken's point is that a Harris survey of Londoners' attitudes to the GLC showed widespread support for his policies; however the press in general, and the London *Standard* in particular, distorted the findings in order to suggest the opposite. 'It can actually be the press reporting of survey material – rather than the findings themselves – which brings controversy in its wake', writes Ken – a point often made by our own Peter 'Sunday isn't Sunday without a Harris poll' Kellner. With Kinnock and Livingstone against them, the days of Labour's anti-polling faction are surely numbered.

Free parking

Anyone who thinks the entrepreneurial spirit is dead should look at an advertisement in the latest issue of *The* magazine ('the quality monthly Londoners cannot buy' – 100,000 copies are delivered free every month to 'London's wealthiest homes'). 'It's easy to get clamped,' says the ad. 'Now it's just as easy to get unclamped! If you have more important things to do with your time than spend hours paying fines and waiting to have your car unclamped, the Car Clamp Recovery Club is for you.' After paying a subscription of £25, you can phone the Club whenever your car gets the treatment. 'Within minutes, one of our radio-controlled team will collect your keys and go to pay your fine for you, while another of our team waits by your car until the clamp is removed.' A splendid idea. If it succeeds, perhaps the Club might care to take it further: for a fee of only £100 a year, we will serve your prison sentence for you . . .

Benn cheers up

People attending the Socialist Society's misnamed 'Summer School' (it was in fact the familiar autumn weekend conference) were delighted to see Tony Benn in such excellent form last Sunday. Freed from the depressing restraints of office, he has clearly taken up the role of the Left's cheerleader. He informed the hundred-odd socialists sitting in County Hall that there was nothing wrong with the Left except its lack of morale. (This would explain his embarrassingly gung-ho column in the *Guardian* each week.) He then broke Left ranks and explicitly rejected the notion of Thatcherism (Mrs T being too poor a thing to inspire a political movement) and the *Marxism Today* analysis of Labour's apparently inexorable decline. This didn't provoke a stimulating row with Communist Party members in the subsequent plenary session, as they appear to have abandoned the 18-month-old Society – set up to draw together members of Left parties in non-sectarian endeavour.

Last words

Britain's daily papers had nothing but praise for 32-year-old Hazel Lester who refused cancer treatment in case it damaged her unborn child. When she died, the tabloid papers devoted their front pages to descriptions of Hazel's extraordinary courage. Indeed, so moved was the *Sun* that it started a fund for her baby Adam, and gave the first £1,000 itself. Oddly, despite their enormous coverage, and extensive quotes from Hazel's letters to her sister (who is to bring Adam up) none of the tabloids managed to mention that one of Hazel's last instructions was that a fund-raising memorial concert be organised. She wanted the money to be divided between CND and the women of Greenham Common. She also left a wish that friends plant a 'White bush for peace and red bush for Socialism' in her memory. The *Sun* will no doubt contribute accordingly.

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Chairman Green goes suddenly

SIR PETER Green's turbulent chairmanship of Lloyd's of London is to come to an abrupt end. On 6 September, Ian Hay Davison, Lloyd's chief executive, announced Green's 'entirely personal' decision not to stand for the fifth successive one year term as chairman and to quit Lloyd's ruling council three years before his membership expires.

The accident prone insurance market was taken by surprise. Green had tenaciously clung to his post throughout the disclosure of the worst series of scandals in Lloyd's 300 year history. It was not until the Bank of England, fearing a collapse of Lloyd's invisible exports, intervened, that steps were taken. At its insistence, Hay Davison was appointed as Lloyd's first independent chief executive with a brief to introduce long overdue reforms. Green saw himself as a force for continuity to protect Lloyd's ancient practices and privileges against outside forces seeking to impose what he had called 'the dead hand of bureaucracy' on the market.

Green was finally outmanoeuvred on two fronts. First, the inconclusive results of an investigation he had *personally* conducted in January last year (a most unusual procedure) into the affairs of an insurance underwriting agency known as PCW were about to come back to haunt him. PCW had bought £400,000 of unusual 're-insurance' from a Monte Carlo company called Unimar. Green's investigation had concluded that there was nothing unusual about this policy. Subsequent events were to prove him wrong.

PCW (so called afted its ex-chairman Peter Cameron Webb) was then run by one Peter Dixon. Dixon and Cameron Webb between them owned 16 per cent of Banque du Rhone et Tamise, a Swiss bank at the heart of a swindle involving Alexander Howden through which $55m. 'disappeared'. PCW was a subsidiary of a public company of Lloyd's brokers called Minet. Last autumn, Minet's chairman John Wallrock resigned, admitting he had personally received $2m. from secret transactions involving certain unnamed subsidiary underwriting agencies.

Department of Trade Inspectors and the City of London police fraud squad have discovered that the £400,000 paid to Unimar was used to set up a 'slush fund' secretly to buy new business for Lloyd's syndicates managed by Dixon. Interest has been expressed in the contents of Green's files from his earlier and less conclusive investigation.

His second mistake could perhaps be attributed more to an accident of birth. Green's father, Toby Green – a popular figure at Lloyd's – passed on to his son a small shareholding in the Imperial Insurance Company of Grand Cayman. Peter Dixon (of PCW fame) was another shareholder and Hogg Robinson, a Lloyd's broking company in which Sir Peter is the largest private shareholder, owns a further 20 per cent.

Shortly after Hay Davison had announced his resignation for him, Sir Peter sent a curious letter to the members of the syndicate of wealthy individual members of Lloyd's whose affairs he looked after. It appears from this letter that for 13 years first Toby and then Sir Peter had bought 're-insurance' from Imperial for the syndicates' own insurance risks. There is no record that the family interest in Imperial was disclosed to syndicate members. Sir Peter explained that the original concern was tax. Back in 1970 it was uncertain whether reserves set aside from profits of a syndicate against future losses would be treated as 'tax-deductible' by the Inland Revenue. On the other hand re-insurance premiums against the same risk were definitely allowable. However, in 1972 the Revenue re-established that such reserves were legitimate deductions. This ruling made the Imperial policies unnecessary, but (remarkably) they were renewed every year. The policies involved were, in Sir Peter's own words 'somewhat esoteric'. Any premiums not used to meet claims were not repaid but were simply 'rolled-up' and carried forward to future years. The result was an accumulation of 'offshore' tax-free capital (estimated at £34m.).

Sir Peter's scheme was a forerunner of the recent, highly sophisticated 'roll-up' tax avoidance schemes which have attracted £1.5 billion of investment since early this year.

Last week the Chancellor announced measures to close this loophole. Sir Peter's letter indicates that the Revenue has shown a particular interest in his scheme which is to be wound up. Imperial and an unrelated company issuing similar policies are to repay £34m. to the syndicate to be set aside in legitimate reserves. This may not be sufficient. On the day of his letter, the Inland Revenue announced that it was seeking full disclosure of all offshore 'rollover-funds' to identify where business has been placed with companies associated with underwriting agents.

In the face of this onslaught Green's position became untenable. The struggle over the future of Lloyd's now has a new focus. Hay Davision has already suggested that Green's successor should be subject to much more stringent vetting, but the word on the floor at Lloyd's is that the new man's first task will be to cut Hay Davison down to size.

David Philip

1960s black leader plans British tour

THE HOME Office has been warned that there could be serious consequences if former black power leader Stokely Carmichael is not allowed to carry out a ten-day lecture tour of Britain later this month. In 1967, Roy Jenkins, then Labour Home Secretary, imposed a banning order on Carmichael, who is now known as Kwame Touré.

Touré, who coined the phrase black power, is due to arrive in Britain on 23 September, on a tour sponsored by the militant black weekly newspaper, *Caribbean Times*, and Hackney Black People's Association. The organisers of the tour have written to Home Secretary Leon Brittan warning him that, if Touré is not allowed into the country to join the other main speakers at the Black Solidarity Rally, it would be interpreted as an 'act of racism'.

Touré was born in Trinidad and is a graduate of middle-class Howard University. He left the USA after the black power movement peaked and went to live in Guinea. There he became a pupil of the country's president, the high priest of Negritude, Soukou Touré and the exiled Ghanaian leader, Kwame Nkrumah.

Recently he and his wife, the South African singer Miriam Makeba, have returned to live in the USA where he has established his own political party.

His political beliefs have undergone a tremendous ideological transformation since the '60s. He has moved on from a fiery but simple black nationalism, and is now arguing that the main problem facing black people all over the world is lack of organisation and co-ordination and a reactionary tendency to look towards heroes for their liberation. He would like to see black people form a permanent organisation which would withstand the 'test of time and carry on the objectives unwaveringly.'

Hal Austin

Council scoreboard

23 June	
Merton LBC	Con hold
Oswestry DC	Lab hold
Lancashire CC	Con hold
Avon CC	LIB GAIN (Con)
7 July	
Norfolk CC	CON GAIN (Lab)
Tower Hamlets LBC	Lib hold
Gosport DC	Con hold
Basildon DC	Lab hold
Tyne & Wear CC	Con hold
14 July	
Rossendale DC	CON GAIN (Lab)
Rossendale DC	Lab hold
Cheshire CC	Lab hold
Bradford City	Con hold
Norfolk CC	Con hold
21 July	
Camden LBC	Con hold
28 July	
Peterborough City	Lab hold
Wandsworth LBC	Con hold
Wandsworth LBC	Con hold
Wokingham DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Rother DC	LIB GAIN (Ind)
Wyre DC	Con hold
4 August	
Thamesdown DC	Lab hold
New Forest DC	Con hold
Thurrock DC	Lab hold
South Glamorgan CC	Lab hold
Castle Morpeth DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
11 August	
Cannock Chase DC	LIB GAIN (Lab)
Leicestershire CC	Con hold
Bromley LBC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Chester City	LIB GAIN (Con)
18 August	
Wolverhampton City	Lab hold
Hampshire CC	Lab hold
Calderdale DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
25 August	
East Cambridgeshire DC	LIB GAIN (Ind)
1 September	
Chorley DC	Lab hold
Inverclyde DC	LIB GAIN (Lab)
High Peak DC	SDP GAIN (Ind)
Lewisham LBC	Lab hold
Babergh DC	CON GAIN (Lib)
8 September	
Southwark LBC	Lab hold
Leeds City	Lib hold
W. Yorkshire CC	Lib hold
Braintree DC	Con hold
West Lothian DC	Lab hold
Cumbria CC	Ind hold
Oadby & Wigston DC	Con hold
Oadby & Wigston DC	CON GAIN (Lab)
Kirklees DC	Con hold
15 September	
Langbaurgh DC	Lab hold
Kingston LBC	LIB GAIN (Con)
North Cornwall DC	Lib hold
Rushmoor DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
GLC (Surbiton)	Con hold
Cumbria CC	Lab hold
Kingston LBC	Con hold

CC: County Council; DC: District Council; LBC: London Borough Council; City: City Council; GLC: Greater London Council

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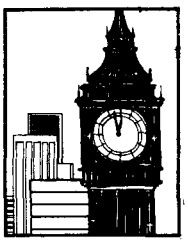

PETER KELLNER, Political Editor

Why the Alliance love affair is on the rocks

HOW DELIGHTFUL, how very delightful. For three years media coverage of Labour's annual conferences has been dominated by the people's party's internal feuds, while coverage of Conservative, Liberal and SDP gatherings has generally served to enhance their reputations. It is a refreshing change to see the Alliance partners subjected to minute examination of their relationship with each other. And even better that the examination seeks out each instance of split, dissent and row, however trivial. Who knows, Labour's conference in Brighton the week after next could even show the party for once in a favourable light.

(Much will depend on whether the conference timetable strings out the nasty stuff – Militant appeals, constitutional wrangles etc – over the whole week, or gets shot of them on the Monday. At the moment it looks like the keepers of the conference timetable intend to string the agony out, allowing the media to report a split a day. There must come a time when even the most loyal Labour supporter asks: if the party cannot manage its own affairs sensibly, how can it be expected to manage the country's?)

Still, let us revel in the Alliance's misfortunes while we may. After a fortnight of wheeling, dealing and debating at Salford and Harrogate, the position, essentially, is that David Owen and David Steel have each successfully asserted their individual authority over their own party, but not without a series of skirmishes, and with their respective groups of dissidents deflected rather than demolished.

For anyone observing all this with Labour's interests at heart, the news could not be better. The SDP has backed Owen who does not want a merger, while the Liberals have backed David Steel who does. The tortuous phrases used by both men to try to square this circle have failed to conceal their fundamentally different attitudes to the way the Liberal/SDP relationship should develop. For the time being the Alliance is alive – but weak and living in sin.

The Alliance's central problem, which the events of the past fortnight have exposed rather than solved, is that its creation owed much to the very specific circumstances of 1981; and those circumstances have changed. When the Alliance was set up, the SDP *was* the Gang of Four. It had some members, some money (and high hopes of raising more) and some staff; but it had no constitution. Whatever the Gang of Four decided automatically became SDP policy. And the dowry that they offered the Liberals was a team of experienced politicians, the aptitude to attract sympathetic media coverage and hopes of raising substantial funds.

Those qualities matched the Liberals' most pressing needs. They possessed policies, an established national structure, a substantial – if patchy – network of grass-roots activists and, in David Steel, one well-liked television personality. However, they had barely anyone with ministerial experience, little money and a tendency not to be taken seriously by the media as a party seeking power. What made the idea of an alliance irresistible to both parties was not their *similarities*, but their *differences*.

As time has passed, the differences have lessened. The Liberals are taken and (more significantly) take themselves more seriously. Steel's experience of government remains precisely nil, but after two years of the Alliance he has somehow conveyed the impression of a man who could command the Ship of State with the same ease that he sees off Cyril Smith on a bad day. Continuously, and on practically every count, he was more highly regarded by the public than the man who had in turn run the Home Office, the Treasury and the European Commission: Roy Jenkins.

At the same time, the SDP has been losing its capacity to offer the Liberals the things that they lack. It has failed to garner extra money; its staff is dwindling; its internal operations increasingly are those of the Liberal Party, only on a smaller scale; and, above all, it has squandered its principal asset, the Gang of Four. Shirley Williams and William Rodgers are out of Parliament and diminished in stature. Jenkins remains, but keeps his distance from Owen. Only the SDP leader himself carries the same weight and appeal as he did two years ago.

The result is that the Liberals and the SDP increasingly resemble each other: enthusiastic but impoverished bands of activists dominated by their respective leaders. The parties still need each other, but their compellingly different, complementary qualities no longer stand out. They look less like adoring lovers than bickering siblings.

WHAT THE VOTERS will make of the goings-on at Salford and Harrogate is another matter. The critical issue is whether either Labour or the Alliance can push the other decisively into third place, and gain public acceptance as the main challenger to the Tories.

So far, both Labour and the Alliance have continued to win broadly similar levels of support since the general election. Our survey of local by-election results since 9 June confirms that picture. We have monitored 55 contests between 23 June and last week (see table opposite). Of these, 44 were three-cornered fights: that is, Conservative, Labour and the Alliance all fielded candidates. More than 100,000 votes were cast in those seats; they were distributed as follows:

Conservative	40,518	38.0%
Liberal/SDP	33,193	31.2%
Labour	30,354	28.5%
Other	2,431	2.3%

As regular readers will know, we have found a consistent tendency for the Conservatives to do worse, and the Alliance better, in local council by-elections than in the opinion polls. Taking those biases into account, our figures are broadly consistent with an average of the polls conducted during the summer. What our figures also show is the continuing dominance of the Liberal half of the Alliance. It has fought almost twice as many seats as the SDP since June, winning 16 out of 34 seats fought – compared with the SDP's one out of 19. The gains and losses are as follows:

	Seats defended	**Seats lost**	**Seats gained**	**Seats held now**
Con	25	8	4	21
Lab	21	5	0	16
Lib	5	1	12	16
SDP	0	0	1	1
Other	4	3	0	1

Those figures offer Labour little comfort; but equally they contain worrying signs for the SDP. At the peak of the Alliance's support, from October to December 1981, Liberal and SDP candidates were winning by-elections in roughly equal numbers. By the time the first nationwide test of public support took place, in the council elections of May 1982, the Falklands factor had already robbed the Alliance of its chance to win councils in large numbers. Ever since then, the Liberals have won the lion's share of whatever the Alliance has picked up: but it has always been a lion's share of a meagre total.

Come next May, the Alliance will hope that, for the first time, it can translate national support into widespread council gains. But what if those gains are achieved mainly by Liberals? When Steel and his allies talk now of 'organic' merger at local level, they know that, with few exceptions, it would mean the Liberals swallowing the SDP. Owen knows it too, which explains why he is so set against the whole thing. As a Labour man, I wish the doctor well. □

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Using tainted evidence

Supergrasses are getting convictions against alleged terrorists in droves. But the legal profession is worried about the precedents. Mary Holland looks at the consequences in Northern Ireland

COURTROOM NO. 2 in Belfast's Criminal Court has an incongruously intimate atmosphere. It is small, laid out like a lecture theatre and freshly painted in toning shades of olive green. After the extraordinary security outside – the soldiers crouched on the pavement, the barbed wire, the searches – it seems almost cosy, or would do were it not for the dozens of armed and uniformed policemen everywhere.

Sir Robert Lowry, the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, presides alone over this trial. His decision to take this trial personally is interpreted by lawyers to mean that he intends with his customary precision to establish the 'rules' for the use of supergrass evidence in future. He does not have to raise his voice when he speaks to the chief and only witness for the prosecution. This is Kevin McGrady, the 27-year-old 'supergrass' on whose evidence ten men are in the dock, charged with crimes ranging from murder to membership of the IRA. He is the original 'converted terrorist' – as the Ulster police prefer to call these informers. Already he has told the court of his religious experiences in Amsterdam, which brought him back to this Belfast court, and of how God talks to him.

Beside McGrady, almost in the witness box with him, stands a young policeman in shirtsleeves. He is, one surmises, the informer's personal minder. At one stage, while he is being cross-examined about a shooting he has witnessed, McGrady shows signs of visible strain. The policeman, who has been taking a rest on a bench some distance behind him, quickly gets up, walks back to the witness box and takes up his almost protective stance beside him.

In front of the judge the lawyers are crammed together, a gathering of eminent QCs jostling for space. By supergrass standards this is a small trial, with only ten defendants, but already there has been considerable difficulty in finding enough experienced criminal law barristers to take on such cases.

By comparison with the lawyers, the prisoners in the dock look almost relaxed. One of them takes notes carefully on McGrady's evidence, but most of them just look on. Behind them, separated by several rows of police, are their relatives. It is their faces which reflect the real strain of this trial, exhausted looking women, accompanied sometimes by adolescent children. They are very quiet. In a number of these trials mothers, sisters and brothers have cried out and begged the witness to retract their evidence. They have then been immediately ejected, sometimes forcibly, from the court.

All the elements that contribute to the drama and controversy of the supergrass phenomenon are represented here, with the exception of the British Secretary of State. To date, some 300 members of paramilitary organisations have been charged on the evidence of 20 informers, who have themselves already confessed to terrorist crimes. Of these, six have later withdrawn their evidence – some because they are afraid of retribution from their own organisations, others under pressure from their families. As a result of the two major trials so far completed, the Ulster police believe that they have broken the Provisional IRA in the Ardoyne area of Belfast and destroyed the Ulster Volunteer Force in the city. The Irish National Liberation Army has also been dramatically weakened by arrests resulting from information given by defectors.

The authorities point to this year's spectacular decrease in crimes of terrorist violence as the most persuasive argument that the supergrass tactic is working. It is evidence which is likely to carry particular weight in London, if and when the government considers the issue. Yet, even those trials which have reached a successful conclusion from the authorities' point of view have aroused grave concern within Northern Ireland, particularly among members of the legal profession.

The first of these involved a UVF informer called Joseph Bennett, on whose *uncorroborated* evidence fourteen men were convicted last April and sentenced, in some cases, to twenty years imprisonment. A self-confessed bomber and gunman, Bennett was given immunity against prosecution for crimes which included serious involvement in at least one murder. A year earlier, the judge presiding over Bennett's case had refused to convict a policeman charged with murder, because the only evidence against him was the uncorroborated testimony of his terrorist accomplice involved in the alleged crime. This led both police and defence counsel to speculate that convictions would be unlikely in Bennett's case.

In the second supergrass trial, 35 people were convicted of IRA activities on the evidence of Christopher Black. As an informer Black epitomised the very worst characteristics common to many recent informers. He had also been involved in paramilitary activity for many years. He had served a long prison sentence and, soon after his release, was re-arrested while taking part in an IRA roadblock. Faced with the prospect of another jail sentence, he appears to have responded very fast to talk about immunity. Within seven days of his arrest he made statements as a result of which 35 people were charged and convicted last month – again the majority of them without any corroborating evidence. One of the accused in the Black case was able to produce more than 30 people in court to substantiate his alibi, but was nevertheless convicted with his co-defendants. Of these, 22 people received sentences totalling over 4,000 years. The remaining 13 were given suspended sentences.

CASES NOW IN the pipeline are likely to arouse even stronger criticism of the use of supergrasses. This concern centres on three main areas: the conduct of the police, the implications for the judiciary, and the much wider political effects in the community at large. In Northern Ireland these are intimately intertwined.

● **The Police** The RUC is highly sensitive to the charge that the use of supergrasses is damaging to its reputation. The Chief Constable, Sir John Hermon, has been at pains to emphasise that the RUC merely assembles evidence against criminals of all creeds and conditions; that it is up to the Director of Public Prosecutions to decide whether the cases should go to court; and that it is then the responsibility of judges to evaluate the evidence. He has thrown his personal weight behind the supergrass strategy, which he believes is less likely to damage the police's relationship with the community than have other methods used in the past to obtain convictions against terrorists, for example, confessions later chal-

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Pacemaker Press

Gerry Adams and his former friend Robert Lean. Will he now be fingered by the latest supergrass?

lenged in court on the grounds that they had been obtained under duress.

Senior policemen are adamant that immunity is not to be given to people who have 'pulled the trigger', i.e. been immediately involved in an act of murder. They stress that any deals done are subject to the approval of the DPP. They cite as evidence of this the case of Harry Kirkpatrick, an INLA informer who nevertheless has already been convicted of five murders and sentenced to life imprisonment. Against this, the authorities have admitted that Kirkpatrick will serve his sentence in a British jail and that, because no recommended length was put to his sentence, he may be inside for as little as 10 years. Lawyers in Northern Ireland argue that, if this does not constitute a 'deal', it looks very like one to outsiders.

On the thorny question of money, the police insist that no direct bribes have been offered to informers. What is offered, they say, is relocation in another country with a new identity, if necessary. James Prior has admitted that the cost of this has already run into hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Other criticisms of police methods in operating the supergrass system have come from priests and politicians involved in prisoners' welfare. Father Denis Faul, a Catholic priest who is also an outspoken critic of the Provisional IRA, has accused the police of 'combing the prisons' for informers. He links this to the charge that the police put intense pressure on potential informers when they are out of prison on licence and that, once recruited, defectors are held incommunicado, sometimes for months. Father Faul also alleges (and this point was also made independently to me by lawyers) that, once an informer has shown that he is willing to co-operate, the police suggest names to him of people whom he may be tempted to incriminate in order 'to increase his value'.

These allegations are denied by the police and are virtually impossible to substantiate satisfactorily. But the very fact that they are being voiced by priests, lawyers and politicians is damaging to the RUC.

● **The judiciary** In the first of the current supergrass trials, the judge made the point that the use of uncorroborated evidence from an informer against former accomplices had a history in English common law going back centuries. Most recently, it was used in Britain in the London gangland trials of the mid-1960s. Since then, I am told that the judiciary's distaste for it has meant that it has fallen into disuse.

Ulster lawyers point out that there is a crucial difference between any use of informers in criminal trials on the British mainland and in Northern Ireland. In Britain, such cases are heard before a jury whose members come fresh to the trial. The judge has to warn them that the evidence of an accomplice must be treated with caution and this warning is likely to carry weight. In Northern Irish terrorist trials the judge sits alone. While he always prefaces his summing up by acknowledging the nature of 'informer evidence', he is likely to have presided over the years at many hideous terrorist trials and to have become 'case hardened' – a process admitted to me in the past by members of the judiciary themselves.

Two other issues affecting the judiciary have already been raised. The first is the difficulty of assessing individual guilt or innocence in a mass trial, where the *entire* case depends on the credibility of one witness. More serious is the legal anxiety about cases where an informer has been convicted and given a life sentence without recommended time. This has aroused the suspicion that the actual sentence served is being left to the discretion of the Secretary of State, who may be lenient about the case of a helpful informer.

In operating the supergrass system, the reputation of the judiciary (not to mention the personal safety of individual judges) is what is most seriously at risk. This must be an urgent cause for concern in a society where the legal system has already had to be gravely modified to obtain convictions against terrorist offenders in what is effectively a state of civil war.

● **The political effects in the community** While Republican and Loyalist informers have already implicated accomplices, it is clear that future trials will involve much larger numbers of Republicans and that the effects will be felt mainly in the Catholic community. Already, attitudes to the supergrass tactic have split along predictable lines – with Catholic politicians disapproving of it and even liberal Protestants (with a very few exceptions) accepting it as a 'regrettable necessity'.

Past attempts to 'smash the IRA once and for all' through internment and physical *ill* treatment during interrogation have resulted in severe alienation of a community which already has little respect for the forces of law and order and the institutions of the state. Last week in Belfast, I found the Catholic community buzzing with rumours about the possible arrest of Gerry Adams himself, in the wake of the arrest of Robert Lean who has been given immunity. Sinn Fein believes that the whole supergrass strategy is designed to put its political leadership in prison.

The authorities express horror at such speculation. The law is the law, they reply; and must proceed along its inexorable course. If Gerry Adams and others have committed crimes and if evidence can be assembled against them, they will be brought to justice and given a fair trial. Unfortunately, very few of Mr Adams's constituents believe that the law works in this simple way.

If prominent Provisional Sinn Fein leaders were to be arrested and convicted, it would almost certainly inflict a serious blow on the political work of that organisation. It would not deal with the problem of the IRA, nor with terrorist violence among Republican groups. Once again Father Faul has warned of the far more likely effects on the Catholic community on whose support the IRA depends: 'The supergrass trials will fill the prisons with persons convicted by a deliberate perversion of justice, families will be enraged, the community further alienated from the law and from respect for the judges . . . Violence will get worse after a short time, because the motivation for it will be increased by a sense of outrage and despair at the lack of fair play.'

It is worth noting that the prospect of another hunger strike is already being actively canvassed. So far, Mr Prior has been remarkably discreet about the supergrass phenomenon. When he has spoken, it has been to express support for the police and to congratulate them on their success. This is understandable. But when Mr Prior arrived in Northern Ireland two years ago, his first policy was to find a resolution to the existing hunger strike and, afterwards, to try to rebuild on the communal devastation that it had caused. More than any British politician in Northern Ireland, he has shown an awareness that security policy must be considered in the context of the wider political situation. It would be ironic if continuing failure to recognise the dangers inherent in the supergrass strategy were to cause Mr Prior the kind of political problems that greeted him when he first came to the province. □

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ECOLOGY

Rainfall over Norway

Rob Edwards reports on the Norwegian government's anti-British campaign

ENVIRONMENTALISTS owe a debt of gratitude to one Robert Angus Smith. He was the man who in 1872 first coined the phrase 'acid rain'. As the controversy over the causes and effects of industrial air pollution in Britain and Scandinavia grows fiercer, the menace implicit in this simple term will do much to aid their cause.

Acid rain – the name given to the pollution caused by the emission of large quantities of sulphur and nitrogen into the atmosphere from power stations, cars and factories – has become the campaigning flavour of the month. One reason for this is the recent announcement that the Royal Society is to run a five-year research project on the topic funded by £5 million from the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) and the National Coal Board. Another is that the Stop Acid Rain campaign in Norway, backed by the Norwegian government, last week funded a three-day visit by nearly 30 journalists, environmentalists and scientists (including your reporter).

Environmental groups in Britain, like Friends of the Earth (Scotland), Greenpeace and the Socialist Environment and Resources Association, are beginning to stir on the issue – not, it has to be said, without some of the usual problems of co-ordination. The campaign to stop acid rain presents them with both problems and opportunities.

Conspiracy theorists in the environmental camp almost believe that there is a plan, masterminded by CEGB chairman Sir Walter Marshall, to use acid rain, largely caused by the industry's coal and oil-fired power stations, as yet another excuse for pushing ahead with nuclear power (which can be attacked for much, but not acid rain). Some also argue that there is a CEGB conspiracy to play down the seriousness of acid rain in order to avoid having to spend money on pollution controls. The new research project is thus seen as merely a way of delaying action. Clearly both conspiracies cannot coexist, although some campaigners posit an ever more sophisticated CEGB strategy which at first conspires to play down acid rain and then, apparently realising the seriousness of the problem, conspires to promote nuclear power. In the real world, it is more likely that the CEGB, as it has always done, is muddling through – making use of whatever propaganda points are available at any time.

The new-found enthusiasm for campaigning on acid rain is partly a reaction to post-electoral despair. It at least is an issue which cuts across party political boundaries and offers some chance of success in the face of Thatcher's large parliamentary majority. The effects of acidification in this country are beginning to alarm the powerful right-wing farmers' lobby. One of the participants in last week's trip to Norway was chairman of the fish farming section of the National Farmers Union in Scotland, Graham Gordon. A fish farmer in Galloway, he now believes that the death in a few days last year of 20,000 of his trout was due to the sudden melting of acid snow.

In forming strategic alliances, however, the environmental lobby has to be careful not to focus on the wrong issues. There are many good reasons for stopping acid rain – not least that it could irreversibly damage Scandinavian and British lakes, forests and soil – but one of them is not to enable the British gentry to rediscover the joys of salmon fishing in Norway (an argument put by one Norwegian businessman last week). The campaign, if it is to be won, must strike the right balance between the emotive and the factual, avoiding some of the excesses to which such campaigns are prone (like the new video which describes acid rain as 'slow chemical terrorism').

The CEGB is, as ever, acting with consummate irresponsibility. By either denying responsibility for the problem, or denying there is anything they can do about it, they are flying in the face of mounting evidence worldwide. Scandinavian scientists barely conceal their contempt for CEGB research on the topic, which they say is anti-scientific and confined to nit-picking. One scientist at the government-run Swedish national environment protection board, William Dickson, describes the £5 million just put into new research as 'dirty money'. He is bitterly critical of previous CEGB research, claiming that it refuses to accept the results of Scandinavian researchers 'because they are too simple'. He estimates that 20,000 lakes and 90,000 kilometres of brooks and small rivers in Sweden have been seriously affected by acidity.

THE OFFICIAL LINE taken by the government in Norway – where 5,000 square miles of lakeland in the south of the country are virtually barren – is a 'softly softly' attempt to coax Britain into taking action. Already eight countries have agreed to cut sulphur emissions by 30 per cent by 1993 and Norway is anxious to persuade Britain to do the same. West Germany, until last year an ally of Britain in refusing to recognise the problem, is now planning to spend the equivalent of $5 billion over the next ten years to combat acidification, following controversy over damage to their forests. A new university study is now being completed which is expected to show that about 30 per cent of trees in West Germany are showing symptoms of damage due to sulphur deposition – a figure more than three times higher than previous estimates.

Pressure is also mounting on Britain's major remaining ally in inaction, the United States, whose pollution has long been damaging fisheries and forests in Canada. But even if the US changed its position, there is no guarantee that Britain would follow suit. According to last week's *New Scientist*, the Department of the Environment, worried about Britain's international image on acid rain, did try to get some large coal-fired power stations fitted with equipment to reduce sulphur emissions. But the plan was fiercely opposed by the CEGB and quietly vetoed by the Treasury earlier this year. The CEGB has recently claimed that measures to cut sulphur emissions to a third – twice as much as Norway is currently demanding – would cost £4 billion in investment and add £700 million in annual operating costs, figures that sound as if they have been plucked out of the air and doubled.

Cynics suggest – and they are probably right – that the British government will be able to ignore the desperate pleas from Scandinavia and avoid taking any action as long as it can pretend that there is no real problem in this country. Evidence is accumulating, however, which is making this posture more difficult to sustain (see *NS* 29 July). Researchers at the government-run Freshwater Fisheries Research Laboratory in Pitlochry, Scotland, have known for some time that at least three lochs in the Galloway Hills have lost their fish over the last 20-40 years due to increased acidity.

They point out that acidification causes poisonous metals like aluminium to be leached from the soil into the water and that this has reached toxic levels in these lochs. They fear that lochs in the Cairngorms and elsewhere in Scotland could be similarly poisoned, but they have yet to publish their latest findings. Lakes in Wales and the Lake District are also known to have been affected. The Forestry Commission is aware of the research being done in West Germany and is becoming more anxious about how acidification is affecting trees in Britain.

Sooner or later the government and the CEGB will have to abandon their evasiveness and recognise the truth. They are destroying nature both here and abroad and it is up to them to accept the responsibility for finding and implementing a solution. Further research is all very well, but what is needed is action – and it is needed now. □

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□ Feminists on the Labour-controlled South Yorkshire County Council are angry that publicity officers have chosen a friendly fire engine called Willie Watertender to highlight the campaign. Now a female version, Winnie Watertender, is to be added following protests from County Councillor Pauline Gilbert. – *Daily Telegraph* (G. Moor).

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- **The nuclear arsenals cannot be used for any rational purpose. Their use would be catastrophic and suicidal. Yet "deterrence" is based upon the assumption that in some circumstances they *will* be used.**
- **Opponents of a nuclear-weapons "freeze" assert that it would perpetuate Soviet superiority. But the Soviets do not have nuclear superiority. They have more megatonnage; the West has more warheads and more accurate missiles. But at the levels of nuclear "overkill" that have existed for many years, "superiority" is strategically meaningless.**

  A freeze should not perpetuate present levels of weaponry: it should be a preliminary to drastic reductions.
- **While the purpose of nuclear deterrence is to prevent intentional war, the weapons it requires create the risk of catastrophe by accident or miscalculation.**
- **Weapons now proposed appear to be intended to give "first-strike" capability. Whether this is attainable or not, the adversary will fear it. Such weapons are destabilising, and increase the risk of catastrophe. Their development results not from any military necessity but from the momentum of the arms race and the commitment and investment of its institutions. No realistic strategy can accommodate these weapons. Their deployment by either side would be prevented by freezing now.**
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TELEVISION

Mission to amuse

Bob Woffinden describes how the high hopes for breakfast television foundered

IT'S HARD NOW to recall the mood of buoyant optimism in which the notion of UK breakfast television was first floated. Not only was it to be a unique opportunity for substantially more current affairs on television. It was also a way of allowing important factual material to be produced independently of the existing BBC/ITV duopoly. The new station would have 22½ hours' broadcasting time per week and was bound to provide a much-needed shot in the arm for serious TV journalism.

It was in 1979 that Martin Smith, UK series producer of Channel 4's *Vietnam*, dreamed up the idea. Together with David Elstein (now executive producer of Channel's 4's *A Week in Politics*) and Jonathan Dimbleby, he took the idea to the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA).

Harold (now Lord) Lever became chairman of the Smith-Elstein-Dimbleby group which was also backed by, among others, John Whitney, then managing director of Capital Radio and now director-general of the IBA; and Nick Ross, the BBC's new golden boy presenter.

The prize – and in December 1980, when the franchise awards were announced, a prize is what it undoubtedly seemed – went instead to TV-am. There was never any ambiguity about the balance of programming which the company was expected to provide. The IBA stipulated that it should consist 'primarily, but not exclusively, of news, information and current affairs'.

Earlier this year, the psephologist David Butler, writing in *The Times*, said he expected breakfast television to add a 'powerful new element' to the cut-and-thrust of party politics at general election time. This was a reasonable assumption. As it happened, breakfast television made virtually no impact at all in the election campaign. By then, the political content of TV-am and the rival BBC service had been cut to a minimum. At TV-am, its chairman Peter Jay's journalistic mission to explain had been jettisoned before the station went on air; while the BBC had from the outset taken a pragmatic view about what sort of television would work 'at the time of day when people are at their most fragile', as Lino Ferrari, deputy editor of *Breakfast Time* (BT), put it.

Many of those who competed for the IBA breakfast franchise now admit that they underestimated the fiercely competitive instincts of the BBC, which was determined not to be aced in this new field. The very success of the first six months of the BBC operation has presented problems, however. For a start, the cost of the enterprise is huge. Start-up costs were set at the reasonable level of £6 million, but have escalated since then. 'They won't tell anyone what it's really costing', says one current affairs producer. Certainly, there are those within the BBC who feel that Breakfast is taking too large a slice of the current affairs cake.

The television industry faces an increasingly competitive future, with more and more stations hoping to attract larger slices of a finite audience. Only last week

Roland Rat: amusing people when they are 'at their most fragile'

Home Secretary Leon Brittan allocated two more satellite channels, this time to the IBA; within a few years there will be eight mainstream services available, even apart from the cable facilities which the government is also fostering. As the pressure on ratings grows (and as budgetary constraints bite deeper), so it is inevitable that current affairs programmes, which cannot hope to attract more audiences, will be squeezed.

Panorama is now working under tight budgetary restrictions; the future of David Dimbleby's *People and Power* is under review after management proposals to merge it with *The Money Programme* were rejected as unworkable; and the new *60 Minutes* teatime programme will be significantly shorter than *Nationwide*, which it replaces. Yet all three enjoyed ratings far higher than *BT*'s.

Another complaint about *BT* is that it is having an insidious influence throughout the current affairs department. Some fear that its lightweight, bland approach will become the *modus operandi*. 'It's becoming accepted as the way to do things', one producer complained. 'That's how it is now with *60 Minutes*. The key questions being asked are, "how do we package it and who shall we get as the weatherman?" No one's concerned about content. There are fewer and fewer of us interested in serious journalism.' (Others put forward alternative views, arguing, for example, that with *BT*'s arrival, the current affairs department has acquired facilities that it has needed for years. Lime Grove, where *BT*, *60 Minutes* and BBC-2's *Newsnight* are produced every weekday, has been equipped with expensive computer technology and video resources. Ironically, it is precisely what *Nationwide*, with its complex regional structure, had always needed.)

However, it is conceded that *60 Minutes* has been put together with a clear eye to the early evening ratings battle. 'It is almost impossible to fight *Crossroads* with factual material', said one member of the team, 'so this will be slightly less daunting for the viewer than the old *Nationwide* set-up.'

TV-am is on the financial mend. Its latest ratings, showing an audience of 1.1 million for the first week after the school holidays (during which its viewing figures had soared) suggest that the station's financial future is secure. Meanwhile, it is deflecting criticism of its editorial performance by allowing two myths to flourish. The first is that the original model failed because of Jay's mission to explain philosophy. In fact, the type of programmes which Jay advocated never failed – because they were never tried. The second is that TV-am was always envisaged as the TV equivalent of a popular newspaper. So it was – but Jay did not have in mind the tabloid press of today, but newspapers like the *Daily Mirror* of the '50s, when editors did not consider 'popular' and 'serious' to be mutually exclusive.

For independent television, the major re-

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percussion of the arrival of breakfast television is that the credibility of the IBA has been blown to bits. There is general agreement that the authority used the wrong criteria to pick the wrong group in the first place; then undermined TV-am's viability by imposing an absurdly long gestation term; and then failed to do anything when the Aitkens made their putsch.

Over on the BBC, certain standards are maintained. Editor Ron Neil proposed that *BT* should not cover the party conferences, since the programme's audience was not a politically aware one. He capitulated, however, to opinion not only from higher up, but also from within his own production team. 'Had we not covered them,' said one, 'we would have forfeited the last vestiges of our claim to be putting on current affairs'.

Meanwhile, Martin Smith admits that he no longer feels good about having started the breakfast TV ball rolling. He argues, however, that the situation could still have been considerably worse. ITV companies, faced with mounting revenue pressure, might simply have filled up the time with cartoons anyway. 'At least now we're able to ask questions about what sort of standards are possible.' □

TRADE UNIONS

Lessons in conformity

John McIlroy looks at trade union education

TRADE UNION education excites little attention on the Left or among union activists. Yet, if the labour movement's problems at root represent a crisis of ideas it is reasonable to inquire what role courses for trade unionists have played in its evolution and can contribute to its resolution.

This is particularly important at the moment. For trade union education is in trouble. In 1978 the TUC Education Department was talking about the provision of 180,000 places every year on day-release courses in the 1980s. Now its own projected figure for this academic year is just over 20,000. The number of actual places provided on the 10-day release courses, to which the TUC sponsors students, has been halved since 1980. The initial high hopes for the clauses in the 1976 Employment Protection Act, which entitled union representatives to paid time off for courses, have been confounded.

A decade ago the TUC was sternly stating that responsibility for trade union education 'must rest with the trade union movement. It is not the responsibility of employers either jointly with unions or otherwise'. Earlier this year it accepted that part of its government grant would be for courses over which management would have an express veto and which would deal explicitly with the problems of management.

The source of many of today's problems can be traced back to the inception of the present TUC educational scheme in 1964 when the TUC took over National Council of Labour Colleges and the specific trade union provision of the WEA. These two unique voluntary institutions had provided the majority of trade union education for most of the century. While there were clear differences in philosophy, the NCLC being avowedly marxist and the WEA standing in the liberal tradition, these two organisations had certain essentials in common.

For both organisations, the purpose of the courses was to enable workers to understand society and how it might be changed. Both attempted to build democracy from the bottom up and ensure that the students directly *as students* should control the educational process they were involved in. Through the WEA branch or the local Labour College trade union students could choose what they wanted to study. What might be termed the 'political democratic tradition' in its heyday from 1914 to 1945 had both successes and failures. It was relatively small-scale and never reached the mass of trade unionists. Whatever its differences, and they were many, it did train a limited leadership cadre as the number of Labour MPs and Cabinet Ministers in the 1945 government, or the number of union officials of the period who had attended NCLC or WEA courses, attests.

From the outset, with its potentialities of reaching more students, the TUC scheme involved those students less than had the previous system. Trade unionists were no longer to have direct decision-making powers *as students* but only via the representative structures of their unions. Here power was concentrated at the top where formal responsibility lay in the hands of the Education Sub-Committee of the TUC General Council. George Woodcock's talk of 'this fundamental principle of responsibility from the top downwards' was reflected in the fact that there was no decision-making body existing lower than this level. There were to be only Regional Advisory Committees, with no equivalent of the trades council.

The national sub-committee consisted of busy General Secretaries. The Regional Committees, composed largely of full-time officials with no decision-making powers, could do little but legitimise a policy decided centrally. Those who made the decisions were primarily the full-time members of the Education Department at Great Russell Street and the full-time TUC employees who organised the programme regionally.

THIS structure made union education less organic to the concerns of the ordinary activist – as did the decision to utilise the public education sector. Rather than employing their own staff, the TUC placed the vast majority of courses in universities, WEA classes and, increasingly, technical colleges so that courses were open to the scrutiny of HMIs and ultimate control by the Department of Education and Science. The structure also separated and isolated those teaching the courses from each other.

Courses were to be limited to union representatives and their content – the role of the shop steward; handling grievances; interviewing members; negotiating skills; procedures; productivity bargaining; and incomes policy – reflected this. It also reflected what was happening in industrial relations at the time. The Royal Commission on Industrial Relations published its findings in 1968 in the Donovan Report. Its recipe for what it saw as the anarchy and disorder of industrial relations (represented by unofficial strikes, restrictive practices and wage drift) was the development of more detailed written agreements and procedures, new wage payments systems and a greater definition and control of the role of the shop steward. Donovan noted the developments in training and education and argued for its expansion 'with a view to using training of stewards as part of a planned move to more orderly industrial relations based on comprehensive and formal company or factory agreements.'

Similar emphases studded the 1968 report of a TUC working party, 'Training Shop Stewards': ' . . . . employers are concerned that he (the steward) should act within the constitutional procedures of his union and industry and observe agreements reached. Training cannot guarantee this but it does give the opportunity for the purposes and nature of the rules to be examined'. The watchword had become *training* not education. The report defined the former explicitly against the latter as ' . . . systematic instruction, study and practice that will help to equip union members to be competent as representatives of their union in the workplace. Obviously this excludes consideration of their wider educational needs'.

The full flowering of the TUC Scheme as a small shoot of state industrial relations strategies had to wait out the interlude of the Heath years. The TUC's intimate relations with the 1974 Labour government and the attempt to reinforce and stimulate the efforts of employers to carry out the Donovan reforms through legislation aimed at reconstructing workplace industrial relations produced major innovations in trade union education. The government introduced legal rights for trade union representatives to take paid leave for approved courses which had to be 'relevant to the carrying out of duties which are concerned with industrial relations between his or her employer and their employees'.

LIKE MUCH of the legislation at that time, this appeared to be a major step forward. Yet ordinary members were excluded and representatives were only entitled to time off to pursue knowledge necessary to their role in the bargaining structure; a section shop steward thus needed to know less than a senior shop steward.

Because trade union education had been brought under the law, the syllabuses of union courses were now to be scrutinised not only by employers but also by industrial tribunals to ensure that these narrow limits were met; in the event of a dispute the final decision as to whether the content of the

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course was acceptable was vested not in the unions but in judges. The pressure this could exercise on course content was reinforced by the Code of Practice which accompanies the legislation and explained and expanded its objectives. Where in the past the purpose of trade union education had been to equip its students for a changing society, it was now articulated as 'improved industrial relations'.

In July 1976 it was announced that under the auspices of the Department of Education and the Department of Employment, £400,000 would be made available for trade union education. By July 1978 the figure had increased to £1m and in 1983 stands at £1.6m. The Labour government had been prepared to support trade union education both as a means of training stewards in the new workplace corporatism and as a means of lubricating the social contract. By the time the open employer offensive had begun, TUC education was trapped within the state structure it had created.

Course content has become even more restricted in the last two years. In 1980, a TUC Education Department spokesperson, Doug Gowan, stated: 'The Rights At Work printed materials have been successfully launched . . . We are currently preparing guidance on how to integrate the Conservative government's Employment Bill proposals into the course. The appearance of this Bill, however, seems to strengthen the approach taken . . . .'

Within 12 months these 10-day courses, surely essential when trade unionists are facing the most important wave of legislation this century, were terminated. When asked for an explanation and discussion of the issue by public education bodies the TUC refused to give any. One TUC Regional Educational Officer refused to allow the issue on the agenda of the Regional Advisory Committee and refused to discuss it at a meeting of tutors. TUC support for other 'advanced' courses has been withdrawn and requests for explanations or even discussion similarly ignored.

Reasons are not difficult to discover. Although these courses fall within the 'allowable' category for state grant, documentation or tutors taking an approach critical of government legislation might precipitate an axeing of that grant, hinted at last year by Norman Tebbit. (In the end it was only reduced.) We have, therefore, the ironic situation where educational bodies are willing and able to put on broad provision which the TUC, enmeshed in strings operated by a hostile government, opposes. TUC education is increasingly predicated not on what students need but on what Congress House feels is likely to avoid the removal of state aid.

The contribution trade union education has made to the labour movement's present ills must be acknowledged and the future of the TUC scheme openly debated. In that context structures must be evolved both to create more formal liaison between the TUC and educational bodies and crucially to involve more directly students who attend courses. Trade union education is too important to be left to the experts. □

CONSERVATION

Fight for Dales Rail

Stan Abbott describes the campaign to save a unique railway

SPRING 1983. A group of wide-eyed railway buffs sit huddled in a draughty church hall in Bradford and gaze lovingly at a nostalgic slide show of mighty steam engines plying the Settle to Carlisle railway – a triumph of Victorian engineering that strides purposefully across the bleak Pennine moorland.

At the back of the hall a 38-year-old Rolls-Royce aero-engine worker from Colne in Lancashire sets up a trestle table from which he sells items of railway memorabilia to the assembled members of Bradford Railway Circle and warns of the threat to the future of the line which links the conurbations of West Yorkshire and Clydeside via the border city of Carlisle.

Late summer. British Rail's announcement of the intended closure of this stretch of the main line network thrusts David Burton and the Friends of the Settle to Carlisle Line Association, of which he is chairman, to the forefront of the fight to save the line, a fight whose outcome could shape the destiny of Britain's rail system.

With about £1,000 in the bank, the association has set about its daunting task by distributing 20,000 leaflets explaining to users of the line the exact procedure for objecting to the closure once BR makes its formal announcement.

It is an announcement that the association has been predicting for almost two years – as long as British Rail has been arrogantly denying any planned closure. It cites the withdrawal of the Nottingham to Glasgow Inter-City service 18 months ago and its re-routing via the West Coast main line through Manchester; its replacement by a local service on which trains haul outdated rolling stock and seem conspicuously timed to miss London and Midland connections at Leeds and which do not run at all on Sundays; the diversion of freight traffic to other lines, sometimes involving detours of hundreds of miles via the East Coast route; a marked reduction of BR's marketing of the line which once described it as 'the most spectacular main line in England.'

British Rail claims the consequent reduction in traffic as reason for not undertaking the £6 million work it claims is needed to repair, or replace, the magnificent viaduct at Ribblehead – an assessment the association intends to challenge with an independently commissioned survey. British Rail strongly denies an orchestrated run-down campaign, but for Bob Cryer, the former Labour MP for Keighley, the pattern is an all too familiar echo of tactics which preceded BR line closures in the '60s.

A Vice-President of the Friends, Mr Cryer believes a government-inspired 'hush' policy kept BR's true intentions secret until after the general election and the subsequent by-election in William Whitelaw's Penrith and Borders seat.

He dismisses the argument over Ribblehead viaduct as a red herring, pointing to the answer he received to a Commons question before the election to the effect that BR had actually underspent by £270 million last year on the amount allocated nationally for maintenance to bridges and viaducts. In a subsequent letter to Mr Cryer, Sir Peter blamed strikes for the underspending. 'In fact,' said Mr Cryer, 'it was an ASLEF strike, which would not affect bridge repairs – rather it would have actually freed the permanent way for work to be done.'

IN THE MONTHS before the run-down began, considerable sums had been spent on the damp-ridden Blea Moor tunnel and work on Ribblehead continued – much of which BR would have to continue under its statuatory obligations, whether the line closed or not. Effective opposition to closure at Parliamentary level, however, is complicated by the fact that the line runs through predominantly Tory shires and Mr Cryer sees the onus of opposition falling on the three local Tories who have indicated that they are against closure – John Watson (Skipton and Ripon), Michael Joplin (Westmorland) and the newly-elected David MacLean at Penrith.

At local level, Tory-controlled Cumbria Council is the pacesetter in the fight to save the line. The council organised a meeting of district and county authorities at Settle in North Yorkshire before the election – a meeting to be repeated on 4 October, by which time its officers will have formulated plans for a £50,000 assessment of the line's future. Although BR plans to keep the line from Carlisle as far as the MoD ranges at Appleby, the county is acutely aware of its value to through passengers in isolated communities where bus rides are painfully slow.

Cumbria's lead is enthusiastically followed by Labour-controlled West Yorkshire and Carlisle city councils, and to a lesser degree by Eden Valley and Craven councils. But the main problem lies with the entrenched Tory heartland of North Yorkshire, whose councillors – while paying lip-service to the campaign – seem unwilling to commit any money. All groups opposing closure, from Transport 2,000 to amenity groups like the Yorkshire Dales Society, are united in the view that only an active campaign to boost the line's usage can justify retention of the line. This would involve the re-opening of stations which at present are used only twice a month in summer and occasionally in winter by local authority-sponsored Dales Rail excursions, which have nonetheless provided cheap access to the countryside for 70,000 city people in recent years.

Some, like Colin Speakman of the

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Yorkshire Dales Society and the man largely responsible for the Dales Rail scheme, believe the line could offer the chance of a 'post Serpell' experiment in non-BR control with government blessing. For some, however, the railway which cost scores of lives to build is doomed to die with the men who worked on it. Men like 73-year-old 'Rabbity Dick' Fawcett, whose paperback memoirs of his days as a guard and signalman poaching rabbits for station staff at Leeds and Bradford are the stock-in-trade of the railway buffs. 'I can't see any future for the railways at all,' he says, as he scans the deaths columns of his local rags. 'Every week or two I can feel another nail in my coffin because another old railwayman has died.' □

FEEDBACK

to our series ***Debating The Future of Socialism***

Going forward

Roy Green, Labour Research Dept., The Labour Party

Labour's leadership contest has helped to focus debate since the election on the party's prospects. These will be clarified further by the outcome of annual conference next month. Delegates will have before them a new economic strategy which supersedes the previous reliance on incomes policies. This strategy is contained in 'Partners in Rebuilding Britain', a 22-page document drawn up by the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee. Its importance for the direction of the labour movement has not been widely appreciated.

One approach to the 'Future of Socialism' constantly reminds us that traditional working class communities – and the values associated with them – have been steadily declining since the war. Our opponents use this fact to make out a case that the Labour Party itself is in a state of terminal decline. Some even want to convince us to try and grope our way back to the fast disappearing 'traditional values'.

The Liaison Committee has drawn a different conclusion. Its task has been to formulate a more broadly based electoral strategy than a platform aimed at a diminishing section of the population. Labour has always been elected to government on the basis of a vision of the future, not the past. This has been a vision of more general appeal than to any narrowly defined working class cultural tradition.

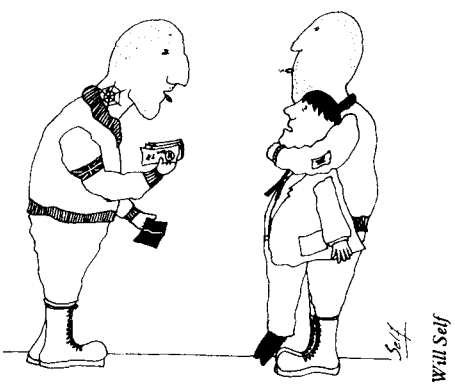
In 1945, it was the construction of a new post-war society. In 1964, the theme was one of modernisation to come to grips with the anticipated 'technological revolution'. And in 1974, it was the 'Social Contract', a new relationship between government and the trade unions after the bruising confrontation of the Heath period.

In the recent election, the Tory and Alliance claims of Socialist extremism centred on alleged proposals for a massive extension of government control over economic life. But the actual commitments in this direction set out in Labour's Programme 1982 are less far-reaching than in the Programme of 1973. On the issue of state control of industry, the Manifesto was really a very moderate document, which forced our opponents to give grossly distorted accounts of what it contained in an effort to make their charges stick. It is, therefore, hard to understand why Labour's campaign seemed unable to rebut more effectively this line of attack.

The presentation of our economic strategy as, in essence, little more than a Keynesian state spending programme must be viewed as a major strategic blunder. Historical references to the reconstruction programme of the Attlee administration did not help, since it is better remembered now for its austerity policies. Labour's campaign was disastrously ineffective because it failed to project an alternative vision, not only to Thatcherism, but also to the traditional political mould – the breaking of which is Thatcher's strong suit. That is why the campaign was continually derailed into side issues and distractions, to the dismay in particular of the trade unions, who had contributed so much in funds and effort and who had so much at stake.

The shortcomings in Labour's image were mainly due, so the Tory press has been telling us for some time past, to the failings of Michael Foot. The real reasons are deeper and rather more complex. In the first place, for most of the period preceding the election, Labour simply did not have a clear and consistent policy with which to meet the challenge confronting it.

No doubt Michael Foot could have cut a better figure in public by putting forward as party policy the simple certainties of one or other factional position, but his task was to provide a protective umbrella beneath which a new policy could be developed. It is clear enough why the press has been hawking incomes policy as the only solution. It wants Labour to remain the reserve team called on to hold down the unions when the Tories momentarily fail. And the failure of previous incomes policies is the ace with which Thatcherism has played a winning hand again and again, lending apparent credibility to her claim 'there is no alternative'.



Labour's policy, however, has gone in exactly the opposite direction to this, with the momentum coming from the TUC through the Liaison Committee, and reflecting the interests and demands of union members at shop-floor level. The key to the new strategy, set out in 'Partners in Rebuilding Britain', is reducing the ability of employers to control the agenda of collective bargaining, giving workers direct leverage over crucial investment decisions. The government will neither have to attempt the impossible task of running industry itself, nor leave economic performance entirely at the discretion of the employer.

From this it follows, too, that the necessary balance between consumption and investment can be struck within the collective bargaining process itself, making it doubly unnecessary for government economic policy to embark on the destructive task of placing constraints on wage bargaining. This new formula does not purport to be a panacea for economic growth. But it does make it possible for Labour to work with the unions by promoting instead of restricting their cardinal activity – negotiating with employers. It combines (consistently) the political and economic interests of trade unionism.

It also provides a solid foundation for unity within the Party. Those on the Left who argue that previous policies have not seen any substantial shift in power in favour of working people will see the new approach as a significant step forward. In addition, however, it should also be supported by those who would baulk at any move towards an East European-style state controlled economy, since that would curtail the effectiveness and freedom of trade unions.

Of course, it must be admitted that the trends towards much closer involvement of the unions with government, which emerged during the Social Contract period, will be greatly enhanced if all the implications of the new strategy are worked out and fully applied. This means that the traditional independence of Labour governments and the PLP in relation to the unions over the implementation of policy will inevitably be further eroded.

This traditional degree of independence reflected a period in which the trade unions played a less central role in political life than they do now. It was justified only so long as it served the interests of the trade union movement itself, and cannot be defended in perpetuity merely as a dogmatic principle or claimed prerogative.

Changing conditions have compelled the unions to adopt a higher political profile in order to defend themselves in a more hostile environment. They cannot survive just by keeping their heads down. It was the more prominent role within the Party played by the trade unions which precipitated the SDP split, rather than the ascendancy of any particular political faction. The 'Gang of Four' recognised that a Gaitskellite social democratic party could no longer find its base of support within the trade union movement. In cutting adrift from the unions, however, the SDP have found it impossible to sustain even supposedly traditional social democratic values such as 'equality' in areas of social policy like health and education.

In contrast to their rhetoric, they have given birth to an earlier version of the Tory Party. Any thought of a coalition with them can be nothing more than a pipe-dream, especially since the election campaign revealed that their sympathies, despite certain differences of style and emphasis, lie more strongly with even the present Tory party under Thatcher.

Labour's vision of a more constructive and responsible role for working people must form the basis for its challenge to both the old and the new Tories. This new position could only be arrived at after profound discussion and debate throughout the labour movement. Consequently, it was not possible to give it an authoritative formulation until April, almost the very eve of the election. With Thatcher's rush to the polls, which the Party did insufficient to deter, there was not enough time to make up the lost ground, and to organise the necessary follow through.

The task of the Party now is to build on the progress made before the election. Thatcher is preparing a massive onslaught against the trade union movement. To meet this attack effectively will require an unprecedented degree of cohesion around a political strategy which places trade union interests and collective bargaining in the forefront. □

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DIARY

Francis Wheen

Harrogate

The streets of Harrogate are adorned with signs marked 'To the show'. It turns out that these refer to the 33rd Northern Antiques Fair, but for a moment I assumed they were part of the ballyhoo with which the Liberal Party likes to promote its Assembly. The Liberals certainly seem in no doubt as to the entertainment value of their deliberations: they have the nerve to charge members of the public for the privilege of watching them. For £1.50 you can observe any one session and for a give-away £2 you can sit through a whole day's proceedings. 'Special reductions' are being offered to school and college parties, but there are few takers.

○

Perhaps the locals are boycotting the Assembly because of their disapproval of the conference centre in which it is taking place. This monstrous edifice, which was opened in December 1981, cost the ratepayers £100 per head. In return for their investment, the people of Harrogate have had the honour of staging the 1982 Eurovision Song Contest and the 1983 Liberal Assembly – plus the odd concert by Nana Mouskouri or James Last. No wonder they grumble. It occurs to me that conference centres are to the 1970s and '80s what high-rise flats were to the '50s and '60s: local authorities engage in a manic and expensive competition with each other to see who can build the biggest and most hideous. The managers of the Harrogate centre seem convinced that they have won the competition. According to their publicity leaflet: 'The centre effectively symbolises Harrogate's far-sighted commitment to the future with an imaginative and inspiring development destined to take a prominent place in Harrogate's history as the brilliant bridge between the 20th and 21st century.'

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Inside the centre, the party's discussions are stupefyingly tedious. The one session which might have been interesting was Tuesday morning's debate on constitutional amendments. However, in a most illiberal spirit, the party chose to exclude the press from this meeting. There is something rather touching about the Liberals' fondness for 'closed sessions'. David Steel cannot send a private letter to his 16 fellow MPs without it leaking, yet his party seems to believe that it can hold a debate in front of a thousand delegates and still keep it secret.

○

I had always thought Cyril Smith to be a straightforward right-winger, but since his recent outbursts he has been portrayed by some newspapers as a standard-bearer of the Left. In fact, he *is* a straightforward right-winger, but he is also an opportunist who thinks it will do him no harm to be associated with the 'activists'. Like Shirley Williams, Smith has somehow managed to create a public image of himself as being cuddly and generally 'nice': again, like Shirley Williams, he is about as cuddly as a boa constrictor. His main skill is as a demagogue and self-publicist. Who could fail to be charmed by that photo of him holding his grand-niece? As one senior Liberal told me: 'Cyril Smith is to microphones and cameras what pigs are to troughs.'

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And what of David Steel? His 'complete break' from politics seems to have been spent issuing statements and writing letters to colleagues, but it has done the trick. Many Liberals are fed up with his aloof style and his attacks on the energetic Association of Liberal Councillors, but they are also terrified of losing him. This is why the proposal to abolish Steel's veto on the manifesto was defeated. As David Alton put it: 'If we change the way the veto operates, he'll resign.' Heart-rending stuff. Because of their fear of 'driving Steel out', most dissidents are now on their best behaviour, prefacing every remark with effusive declarations of loyalty to the leader. In this intimidating atmosphere, the lone voice of candour is the new issue of *Liberator*, the radical Liberal magazine, which accuses Steel of 'breathtaking and arrogant insensitivity to the feelings of the party'. But candour only goes so far: the article is unsigned.

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ROGER WODDIS

Supermag

(Acknowledgments to A.A. Milne)

Asked whether her Holland trip had taxed her strength after her operation, Mrs Thatcher replied, 'It might be too much for a normal person, but after all it is me.'

If people ask me,
I always tell them:
'Very well, thank you,
I'm very glad to say.'
If people ask me,
I always answer:
'I'm feeling better
And better every day.'

I always answer,
I always tell them,
If people ask me,
I'm fit as fit can be.
It's not my practice
To take it easy,
I'm not quite *normal*,
Oh, heavens, no – I'm ME!

If people tell me
I look as though I'm knackered
(A rare occurrence,
I hasten to explain),
I make them promise
To keep a secret –
Being so super
Can be an AWFUL STRAIN!

There is a sense of *déjà vu* about these arguments. A leader who treats his party with contempt, but is nevertheless thought to be popular with the electors; 'grass roots activitists' who object to the way in which the leader kept their policies out of the manifesto at the last election; a campaign to make the leadership more 'accountable' to the members. How like the home life of our own dear Labour Party after the 1979 election, with Boy David playing the part of Uncle Jim. Those who doubt the parallel might care to note that Tony Benn and Jon Lansman, veterans of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, arrived in Harrogate on Wednesday. I'm sure their intentions are honourable.

○

Benn and Lansman have been by no means the only foreign visitors to the Liberal Assembly. As one would expect, the place is swarming with Social Democrats: I suppose it was equally predictable that Jonathon Porritt of the Ecology Party would turn up. On Tuesday afternoon I bumped into the sinister figure of Lady Olga Maitland, dispensing smiles and pro-Bomb propaganda. But Labour is making an effort as well. Paul Boateng from the Greater London Council has come to talk about 'racism in the '80s', while Ken Livingstone (accompanied by his faithful amanuensis, David Rose of *Time Out*), is urging Liberals to save the GLC. As he arrived at the conference centre on Monday and surveyed the colourful and eccentric delegates surrounding him, Ken declared that 'A lot of these Liberals are just like us'.

○

The Liberals are a musical bunch. One conference stall is selling copies of David Steel's single 'I feel Liberal – alright' (sic), which mysteriously failed to reach the hit parade. At a reception on Monday night guests were entertained by Councillor David Fox and his quartet (playing 'light music') and the livelier sounds of Michael Meadowcroft MP and his jazz group. The annual glee club kneesup is due on Friday night. Roy Jenkins went to this event last year only to find himself on the receiving end of some scurrilous anti-SDP ditties. Party officials were making strenuous efforts to prevent David Owen from attending this year's sing-song.

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Changing the guard

Barry Cohen looks back on the career of Begin's successor and their joint view of the policy of Greater Israel

FOR THE PAST six years, Menahem Begin has dominated Israeli politics in a way not seen since the days of Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion. Begin's political rigidity and hectoring style helped to explain why his Western critics failed to appreciate his ideological roots. Although outside observers tend to see Zionism as a hegemonic nationalist movement, it actually encompasses two major conflicting traditions.

Labour Zionism, with its social democratic policies and institutions, had been the dominant force in the Jewish community from the time of the British Mandate until Begin's electoral victory in 1977. In the 1930s, however, Begin's mentor, Vladimir Jabotinsky, broke away from mainstream Zionism to create the Revisionist movement. The dispute revolved around the role of armed struggle in the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. The Zionist establishment believed that diplomacy and international pressure were the essential components in the Zionist strategy. Jabotinsky argued, however, that the growing threat of Nazism to the survival of European Jewry compelled the entire Zionism movement to press for the earliest possible statehood – regardless of any opposition from Arab nationalism or British imperialism.

The underground organisation, the Irgun, which Begin led from 1943 until Israel's establishment in 1948, was inspired by Jabotinsky's belief that an 'iron wall' of armed strength was necessary to achieve a Jewish majority in Palestine in its ancestral lands on both sides of the Jordan River. For Begin, the gun was always the key instrument in the process of Jewish national redemption. In *The Revolt*, his personal account of the pre-state underground days, Begin recalled the guiding motto of his organisation (adapted from Descartes): 'We fight, therefore we are'.

When Begin's Likud coalition attained power in 1977, it was quick to realise that it now had a great historic opportunity to fulfil this Revisionist-Zionist dream. With its hands on all the state levers of this regional super-power, the Likud government set about absorbing the West Bank – with a vengeance.

Undoubtedly, Begin's supreme diplomatic triumph was the conclusion of a separate peace treaty with Egypt. It required an Israeli 'de Gaulle' to return a great stretch of strategic territory to his country's major adversary. Initially, Israel's signing of the Camp David agreement in September 1978 created a false sense of hope that Begin could be persuaded to compromise territory in return for peace with his Arab neighbours. But it failed to account for his mystical attachment to the concept of a Greater Israel.

Begin's immediate successor, Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, is the first leader of Begin's party (Herut) to be elected, rather than selected through acclamation by party members. His victory over the Sephardi (Oriental) community's rising young star, Deputy Prime Minister David Levy, was clearly a triumph for Herut's Old Guard. If Shamir's past is any guide to future policy, he may yet make Begin's tenure appear relatively moderate.

SHORTLY AFTER arriving in Palestine from Poland in 1935, Shamir enlisted with the underground Irgun. In 1940, when the Irgun split, he joined the more militant breakaway faction, Lohamei Herut Yisrael (Israel Freedom Fighters). It later became widely known as the Stern Gang, after its leader, Abraham Stern.

Shamir rose rapidly within the organisation's ranks and eventually found himself high on the British wanted list. As the Stern Gang's chief operational planner, he is credited with organising the 1944 assassination in Cairo of Lord Moyne, Britain's Minister of State for the Middle East. After his second escape from a British detention camp in Eritrea, Shamir made his way to France where he received political asylum.

John Minnion

Upon his return to Israel in 1948, Shamir planned the assassination in September of the UN mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, who had strongly advocated the return of Arab refugees displaced during Israel's War of Independence. Although never revealed in the Western press, Shamir was detained for his role in this action for at least 18 months under Israel's defence regulations. However, he was never brought to trial.

Following his release from detention, Shamir wrote to Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, offering to put past rivalries behind him. He suggested that his underground experience could be put to good use in Israel's secret service. Ben-Gurion accepted his offer and Shamir embarked on a new career in the incipient MOSSAD. Between 1955 and 1967, Shamir directed MOSSAD's European operations from its headquarters in Paris. During this period, Israel's close alliance with France blossomed, beginning with the 1956 Suez campaign. Both countries shared a common interest in stemming the rise of militant Arab nationalist movements. By the time of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, when de Gaulle severed the alliance with Israel, the prestige of MOSSAD's Paris office had grown enormously.

Shamir joined Begin's Herut party in 1969. As a reward for encouraging some of his old underground comrades to follow him into the party, Shamir was brought into Herut's Knesset (Parliament) faction after the 1973 elections. After his appointment as Knesset Speaker in 1977, he replaced Moshe Dayan as Foreign Minister when Dayan resigned in October 1979. However, an informed source close to Herut told the *New Statesman* that Shamir was at the bottom of Begin's list of candidates due to his lack of trust in Shamir's capabilities.

On foreign policy issues, Shamir has unashamedly upheld a consistently hawkish line. He opposed Begin's peace agreement with Sadat, since it meant the abandonment of Israeli settlements in Sinai. His tough, unsophisticated approach to the issue of retaining the West Bank and Gaza Strip was reflected in a blunt remark publicly uttered last year: 'The land of Eretz (Greater) Israel is ours. Why? – because'.

Lacking Begin's charisma, Shamir will find it more difficult to rally the Likud troops for the next election, which will most probably occur in the spring of 1984. Meanwhile, the current makeshift arrangement with the coalition partners will have to withstand the pressures arising from a still rapidly deteriorating economy and a Lebanese quagmire from which this caretaker government cannot extricate itself.

Constantly looming over Shamir will be the long shadow of Ariel Sharon whose appetite for power continues unabated. Having thrown his support behind Shamir in the leadership contest, Sharon is likely to be

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rewarded with the chairmanship of the crucial Ministerial Committee on Settlements. For the 54-year-old Sharon, this will merely serve as a stepping-stone towards his eventual bid for party leadership.

Begin's reign has wrought massive changes in Israeli politics. The West Bank has virtually been annexed, while any foreseeable Arab military threat to Israel has been eliminated. At the same time, Begin's demagogic appeals to blue-collar voters, coupled with the deepening repression of the Palestinian population, have led to an erosion of Israeli democracy as well as the social-democratic structure on which the state was built.

If Begin can manage any political comeback in the coming months, he would undoubtedly campaign on behalf of the Likud coalition. Indeed, his support will be sorely needed for Shamir to beat off a determined challenge from the Labour opposition. The right-wing forces require several more years of government to ensure that their policies irretrievably alter the three decades of previous Labour rule. □

TURKEY

Kangaroo courts

Alex Lyon reports on a recent visit

IN A LARGE gymnasium in an enormous barracks on the outskirts of Istanbul, 78 trade unionists from DISK, Turkey's second largest labour confederation are on trial – 48 of them for their lives. They are charged under Article 146 of the Penal Code (adopted in 1938 from Mussolini's) with the offence of abrogating the law of the Republic and the Parliament established thereunder. That sounds very serious indeed and the length of the indictment underlines the gravity. It is a printed volume of 855 pages.

The reality is very different. Nowhere in the charges, let alone the evidence, is there any reference to any use of violence to further the ends of DISK. The 78 defendants are being charged for their ideas. There is one charge against all of them and it amounts to this. In order to improve the working conditions of their members, they advocated increases in wages, or better conditions which in view of the prosecution amounts to establishing the 'hegemony' of one class over another, which in turn amounts to Communism, which has been illegal in Turkey since Ataturk.

Last month, as members of a British Parliamentary delegation, Chris Smith, Clare Short and I listened in astonishment as the judges in the military tribunal read out passages from the prosecution files for a whole day. Occasionally, we were forced to laugh in disbelief as the judges, in all seriousness, used against the accused extracts from their speeches, or writings, advocating pay rises for school caretakers, or better boiler houses for janitors in flats.

Their lawyers, who are all giving their services free, are under constant harassments. They can see their clients for only 20 minutes a week and they may have to talk to as many as 20 defendants in that time. The interviews take place through a wire mesh and guards are close enough to hear all that is said. The leader of the Istanbul Bar Association was defending DISK's General Secretary, Abdullah Basturk. When the Military Prosecutor finished reading the indictment at the opening of the trial, it was the intention of this lawyer, Orhan Apaydin, to submit that the tribunal had no jurisdiction since the martial law, which created it, was not properly pronounced under the constitution. Before he could do so he was arrested and charged with 25 others in a parallel trial of members of the Turkish Peace Association. Another lawyer then rose to submit that there is no case to answer – as indeed there is not. He was then put in prison for three days.

Now a new decree ensures that any lawyer who is merely *charged* with an offence shall be disbarred. So any lawyer brave enough to defend anyone charged under martial law risks losing his job, his freedom and maybe his life.

For the DISK trial is not unique. Some 30,000 people have been tried under martial law and there are 38 cases currently under way in Istanbul alone. The DISK case is only heard on two days a week so that the colonel, major and captain who comprise the court can hear other cases on the other days. When we went to see the Peace Association trial, it did not begin until the afternoon because the court was still involved with another one. Yet all these trials have been going on for two and three years.

The members of the Peace Association are charged with promoting the hegemony of one class over another, because – using the same arguments as CND – they proposed an end to the arms race and ending Turkey's membership of NATO. The indictment argues that only the Soviet Union could benefit from such a policy and that, since it is communist, the defendants were promoting the interests of one class over another.

The selection of the defendants is particularly clever. Its President had been an ambassador and a professional diplomat for 27 years. The President of the Bar Association is an internationally respected lawyer. There is a President of the Medical Society, a professor of physics, a leading engineer, a distinguished playwright and a popular film actress. There is, in effect, one representative of each profession in Turkey and the message is plain. If these people can be charged, so can you.

All of this is happening in a country which is a member of NATO, an associate member of the EEC, a member of the Council of Europe, a signatory of the European Convention on Human Rights and the only dictatorship in Western Europe. It may not be possible to do much about violations of human rights in Poland, in the Philippines or Chile. But, if we cannot bring pressure to bear on Turkey, then what is the point of the Western Alliance? Five countries in the Council of Europe, including France, have brought a complaint against Turkey under the Convention on Human Rights. Britain has so far refused to join with them. An American congressional committee is considering the violation of human rights in Turkey, but there has been near silence in our Parliament. Most striking of all is the neglect of the British press. The pressure placed by the Polish authorities on Solidarity has not been anywhere near as bad as the pressure on DISK, which represented one-third of Turkish workers. Brave men and women who face death or imprisonment for their beliefs deserve more sympathy in Britain. □

Alex Lyon was MP for York from 1966 to 1983.

IRAN-IRAQ

Third anniversary

Dilip Hiro on a war with 300,000 dead

WHILE THE WORLD'S attention is focused on the strife in Lebanon, the Iran-Iraq war is about to enter a new, dangerous phase.

France is on the verge of delivering the first of five Super-Etendard fighter bombers, along with Exocet missiles, to Iraq. It is doing so to help end the war which, since its launching on 22 September 1980, has claimed the lives of an estimated 300,000 troops and civilians. The Quai d'Orsay is justifying its decision with the argument that, as long as Iran continues to export more than 2,000,000 barrels of oil per day from its Kharg Island terminal, and finance the war painlessly, it is unlikely to heed Iraq's repeated peace signals.

Iraq has so far failed to damage the well-defended Kharg Island, or the tankers loading there, because its present aircraft lack the range and accuracy to do the job. Once it has acquired the long-range Super-Etendard, with its inflight refuelling facility, it will be able to hit these targets easily. With its oil revenue crippled, Iran would have no choice but to negotiate peace.

The French reasoning is dangerously flawed. It assumes that Iran will passively accept the Iraqi action; that money is the key to Iran's determination to fight on; and that Iran will negotiate only when it finds that it is being economically damaged.

These assumptions run contrary to facts. Since the French-Iraqi deal was first leaked

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to *Le Monde* in June, Tehran has warned that if Kharg Island installations, or the nearby tankers, are damaged, it would 'make it unsafe for any ship to enter or leave the Persian Gulf'. Plainly put, it means that Iran would mine the Hormuz Straits.

Iran has also threatened to hit the oilfields of Iraq's allies in the Gulf: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. That this was no empty threat became apparent when the US intelligence satellite pictures revealed that Iran had moved many of its fighter aircraft to its southern airfields.

There is little doubt, however, that given the massive presence of the American, French and British navies in and around the Gulf, the Western allies can effectively tackle the Iranian threat. But will they – knowing well that the 1921 Soviet-Iranian treaty allows the Soviet Union to enter the Iranian territory if it feels threatened by a third country's moves into Iran? (This treaty was the basis of the Soviet march into Iran in August 1941 during World War II.)

But the conservative Arab states would have great difficulty containing other sabotage activities of Iranian supporters in the Gulf's oilfields and refineries. Saudi Arabia's Shia minority – which regards Ayatollah Khomeini as a divine figure – is concentrated in the Eastern, oil-rich province of Al Hasa. In the past, Al Hasa has been a scene of bloody confrontations between Saudi security forces and the Shias. As for Kuwait, 30 per cent of its citizens are Shia.

The chances of retaliatory sabotage in the Iranian oilfields are minimal. As a result of the turmoil that gripped the country after the revolution, the Islamic régime carried out large-scale purges in the oil industry – and improved the overall efficiency of its security and intelligence services.

OIL IS CRUCIAL to the Iranian economy. It is almost the only earner of foreign currencies for Iran. That is why the Iranian government is already pressing ahead with its plans to erect new oil terminals in the south, outside the range even of advanced aircraft. Even so, knocking out the Kharg oil installations would not cripple Iran's economy. With $9.5 billion in foreign reserves, Tehran has enough to pay for its civilian and military imports for six months. In addition, it has the unrivalled treasure of three imperial crowns, two trays of unmounted jewels, and the Peacock Throne – all of them worth at least $50 billion.

Misreading the Iranian realities was at the root of President Saddam Hussein's decision to invade the Islamic Republic: a decision which has proved disastrous for his régime. Accepting at face value the reports on Iran by the Western media (and exiled Iranian generals and politicians), Saddam Hussein believed that once his troops had marched into the oil-rich Iranian region of Khuzestan, the disaffected Arab Iranians of that province, the Bakhtiari tribe in the adjoining area (supposed to be fiercely loyal to Shahpour Bakhtiar, the Shah's last prime minister), and the long-suffering urban middle classes everywhere, would rise up against Khomeini, 'the Mad Mullah' – and welcome the Iraqi troops as liberators. The operation was expected to take three weeks.

Three years have gone by. Instead of causing his downfall, the Iraqi invasion enabled Khomeini to rally the nation and consolidate his régime. Today, despite the loss of an estimated 200,000 civilian and military lives sustained so far, Khomeini's power base is larger and stronger than ever before. He has prepared Iran for a long war of attrition, and plans to wear down the Hussein régime by launching a continual wave of offensives.

Last month, in an ironic reversal of roles, aided by the rebel Iraqi Kurdish and Shia groups, the Iranian forces managed to secure a foothold in the Haj Omran area of Iraqi Kurdistan. Some days later, the Tehran-based Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution of Iraq announced the opening of its office in Haj Omran: its first presence on the Iraqi soil.

Before the war, Iraq was exporting 2,500,000 barrels of oil per day and had $30 billion in foreign banks. Today its oil exports are down to 600,000 barrels per day. Of its three outlets for oil, only one – passing through Turkey – is operational. Its other oil outlet to the Mediterranean has been closed by Syria and its terminal in the Gulf destroyed by Iranian planes.

Iraq has spent all its foreign reserves. It has borrowed at least $30 billion from its Gulf allies. In addition, it owes French companies, mainly arms manufacturers, $5-6 billion. The French government in selling, or leasing, Super-Etendard planes to Baghdad wants to see that a debtor client does not go under. □

UNITED STATES

Out of control

Peter Pringle looks at defence spending figures

WILL US DEFENCE spending be a trillion dollars in fiscal year '85? A quadrillion in '86? Or a quinquillion, or even a zillion, by the end of the century?

Recently I came across an alarming forecast from an unexpected quarter. If America's defence spending patterns continue unchanged for the next 70 years, goes the forecast, the entire defence budget in the year 2054 will purchase just one aircraft.

Who could have made such a forecast? One of those liberal military 'think tanks' may be? A remorseful retired general, perhaps? Not a bit of it. This US defence fantasy is the brainchild of Norman Augustine, the president of the aerospace division of Martin Marietta, one of the top US defence firms and a key insider of the American 'military-industrial complex'.

Well, is he serious? Could it really be that the weapons makers will price themselves out of the market? Could this be the answer to arms control?

No such luck, of course. Mr Augustine and his pals, you may be sure, are just doing their little bit as members of the military-industrial complex to ensure that the defence market remains as strong as it is today.

The citizens of America on current form will pay up. By 1986 – at the end of the proposed Reagan defence build-up – the total military budget will take 59 cents out of each federal dollar. And that's a fact, not fantasy.

So, why these warnings from the armsmakers? The fact is that, behind the rantings of the right wing for more defence spending, there have been some important indications that the American public is increasingly aware that the Pentagon makes an awful lot of stupid purchases and should be curtailed. Ever since the 1961 Eisenhower warning against 'the unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex', the problem has been recognised publicly. But attempts to do anything about it have failed. Now, the sheer size of the expenditures, if nothing else, has produced a renewed effort to re-examine how defence dollars are spent.

The American public is being provided with a flood of ludicrous examples of wasteful defence spending and unreasonable overpricing. Recent examples include:

- The US Navy was building a dog kennel at one of its bases at a cost of $40,000 (the dog was said to need such plush quarters because its job was to sniff drugs and explosives and it was a very sensitive beast).
- A $20,000 business-pleasure trip planned by the Secretary of Defense, Casper Weinberger, to a woodland hideaway outside San Francisco was cancelled after public uproar.
- The Navy, again, was caught buying a 4 cent electronic diode from the Sperry Corporation for $109. Navy Secretary John Lehman has promised to ask Sperry for a refund.

Recently, the *Los Angeles Times*, a major conservative daily newspaper, sent a team of reporters to interview 'dozens of Defense Department officials, military officers, arms makers, politicians, Pentagon critics, economists and defence intellectuals'. The survey concluded that the military-industrial complex was making 'captives' of Congressmen, State officials and *even* Presidents, 'who often support questionable military spending out of fear of their political lives'. The *Times* commented: 'Under such pressure, the built-in checks and balances of American government repeatedly break down'.

The *Times*'s conclusion is not telling us anything new, of course, but it is interesting that a major conservative American newspaper is making efforts to re-examine the problem. The *Times* even quoted George Kennan, former US Ambassador to the Soviet Union and noted liberal, who said, 'people have not yet learned how to create

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and cultivate great military establishments, particularly those which include weapons of mass destruction, without becoming the servants rather then the masters of what they have created . . .'

THIS IS PRETTY heady stuff for the Hollywood crowd. The *Times* boldly presented its findings in a 16-page pull-out section entitled, 'Servants or masters? Revisiting the military-industrial complex'.

One of the *Times* reporters, David Wood, took the trouble to disassemble the parts of the new generation B-1 bomber to find out where they came from. He discovered that the principal components were made in more than a dozen States but that each bomber will be put together from 50,000 parts made by more than 5,000 contractors in all 48 continental States of the Union.

Traditionally, these contractors have bombarded Congressmen with lobbying tricks of one kind or another, either by direct mail shots, or personal visits to Capitol Hill, or by organising powerful coalitions of workers, union leaders and businessmen back home. But there are also thriving 'old boy' networks among the Pentagon's myriad advisers and consultants. In the case of the B-1, Wood found that almost all of the major B-1 sub-contractors have for the last 20 years held seats on either the Defense Science Board or the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board. Both these bodies are key in assessing the nature of the Soviet threat and what the proper American response should be.

The *New York Times* has also displayed extra outrage recently over defence spending. It singled out a report from the General Accounting Office (the government's watchdog) for special comment. The report concerned the Navy's plans to spend $40 billion to buy 1,377 new F-18 warplanes, a plan which has already incurred 400 per cent cost overruns since it started in 1975.

Most of the costs were attributed to faulty estimates of inflation plus inflation of the costs of design changes. But what irked the *Times* was the fact that the Navy planners were caught trying to conceal the overruns in a 'series of budgetary and funding manipulations'.

Nothing new in that, you might say, except that the GAO also discovered that the new F-18 design is inferior in operation to the plane it is replacing – the A-7 fighter bomber. The new F-18 is so heavy with high-tech gear that it has roughly half the range of the old A-7.

Striking a similar note of disgust, the Los Angeles newspaper, in its series, gave the last word to President Eisenhower who wrote, several years after he left office:

> There is no way in which a country can satisfy the craving for absolute security – but it can easily bankrupt itself, morally and economically, in attempting to reach that illusory goal through arms alone. The military establishment, not productive of itself, necessarily must feed on the energy, productivity and brain power of the country and, if it takes too much, our total strength declines.

Today's question is how much of Eisenhower's warning will be heeded. □

SPAIN

Waving flags

Howell Llewellyn on the long, hot Basque summer

Madrid

ASKED BEFORE Spain's Parliament reconvened this week what he thought would be the Socialist government's major problems this autumn, Senate chairman José Federico de Carvajal answered: 'Unemployment, the economic crisis and the war of the flags in the Basque Country'.

The war of the flags is exactly that, a battle which has seen the Basque Country's worst riots for years, hundreds of people injured, dozens of arrests – including local councillors – town halls paralysed and occupied by police. Especially galling to the Socialists is the fact that the war of the flags has been a victory for far Left nationalists in the Herri Batasuna (People's Unity) coalition, who have mauled the government's policy towards the 'autonomous' regions.

The summer of flag burning started just as the season of town *fiestas* was getting under way. On 5 July, the Tolosa town council lowered the town hall's Spanish flag, wrapped it up and sent it to Interior Minister Jose Barrionuevo in Madrid. A note said the flag was no longer desirable in the town. Traditionally at local *fiestas*, three flags fly from town hall balconies – the Spanish, the town flag, and the Basque 'ikurrina'. Tolosa's move sparked off an anti-Spanish flag mania that swept through the Basque region. Five days of rioting left 200 injured in Renteria, where disturbances began as plain-clothes police applauded the raising of the Spanish flag at the opening carnival ceremony. Fierce street fighting erupted on the first day of the San Sebastian fiestas. Police waded into flag-burning crowds. Among the 70 injured were the mayor, Ramon Labayen, and the local police chief.

Three San Sebastian HB councillors who removed the Spanish flag from the town hall face charges of 'treason' and 'outrage against symbols and emblems of the Spanish nation'. Three Bilbao councillors face similar charges and one in Portugalete is accused of 'crimes against the security of the State'. Town hall workers in Renteria and Bilbao struck against police occupation of their town halls to 'protect the national symbol'.

THE RIGHT is livid. Opposition leader and former Franco minister, Manuel Fraga, wants HB to be proscribed and a 'state of exception' to be declared in the Basque Country. He said: 'We cannot continue along a path of violence towards a civil war that all Spaniards have an obligation to avoid'. Under the headline 'Enough, enough, enough', a high-ranking military officer wrote in the monarchist daily *ABC*: 'This is armed rebellion, not just a gang of thugs, and it will have to be dealt with as such sooner or later. We cannot let them destroy the indissoluble sacred unity of Spain'.

Carlos Garaikoetxea, PNV leader and president of the Basque Parliament, describes the HB separatists as 'nazis' and 'the Pinochets of our country'. Premier Gonzalez promises an 'iron fist' to deal with the violence, recalling that 'many progressive governments have fallen because they have not been able to preserve social peace'.

The government is committed to the process of giving greater autonomy to the regions, but cannot achieve anything without a political solution to the Basque problem. This requires agreement with the PNV, but as long as HB is able to provoke the continuing spiral of action, repression and reaction, the PNV is forced to adopt a defensive stance. For example, the PNV-dominated Basque Parliament refuses to fly the Spanish flag over regional government buildings. To do so, it says, would be to accept blame for the war of the flags, and would mean 'giving in' to Madrid.

To many, the Socialist government in Madrid seems bent on open conflict with the regions, or on advertising what is increasingly obvious – that it has failed to find an effective policy for them, especially for Euskadi and Catalonia. Last month's decision by the Constitutional Tribunal that LOAPA, a Socialist-backed bill for the autonomous regions, was unconstitutional was hailed as a major victory for the Basques and Catalans. For it meant either that the entire bill would have to be withdrawn, or drastically revised.

But the day after the ruling, the Minister for Territorial Administration, Tomas de la Quadra, turned Basque joy into indignation. Announcing a 'continuist line', he said that the Socialists would not withdraw the bill, and would not negotiate with the regions. The bill would be handed back to Parliament still containing the 24 (out of 38) articles which were unscathed by the Tribunal's finding.

HB warned that because the Socialists had not ceded one millimetre in their policy towards the regions, the Tribunal ruling was just a 'poisoned sweet'. Euskadiko Ezkerra (Basque Left) said the government's plan to salvage the discredited bill was the 'great swindle of the century'.

The government is making the same mistake as previous centrist administrations. Its brave new anti-terrorist plan for the Basque region has been condemned by all except the far-Right and PSOE itself. Essentially, it offers a police rather than a political solution.

The Socialists have an unenviable choice between their programme of increased liberties, or further repression which could undermine their so far solid electoral strength and play into the hands of both the far Right and the radical separatists. With elections in the autonomous regions due next March, HB is already rubbing its hands. □

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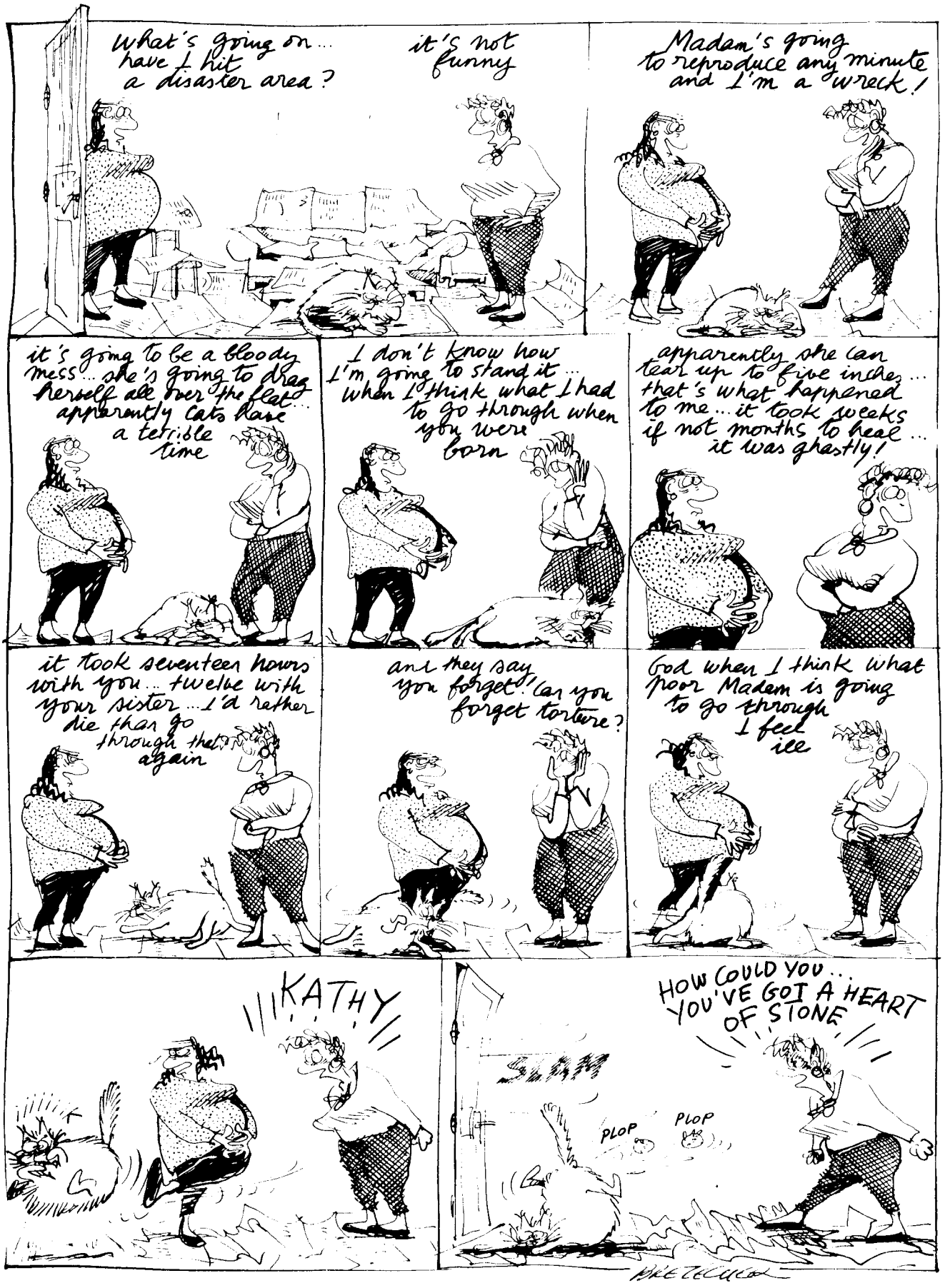
BRETECHER

madam


What's going on... have I hit a disaster area?
it's not funny
Madam's going to reproduce any minute and I'm a wreck!
it's going to be a bloody mess... she's going to drag herself all over the flat... apparently cats have a terrible time
I don't know how I'm going to stand it... when I think what I had to go through when you were born
apparently she can tear up to five inches... that's what happened to me... it took weeks if not months to heal... it was ghastly!
it took seventeen hours with you... twelve with your sister... I'd rather die than go through that again
and they say you forget! Can you forget torture?
God when I think what poor Madam is going to go through I feel ill
KATHY!!!
HOW COULD YOU... YOU'VE GOT A HEART OF STONE!!!
PLOP
PLOP

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LETTERS

Blueprints for education?

C. P. Hall, Oxford

Professor MacCabe asks (*NS* 9 Sept.) how it is that 'the public schools . . . will increasingly be taken as the norm against which comprehensive schools must be judged.' I suggest he consider first the values of respect for persons and the things of the mind and spirit which he will easily find among readers of the *New Statesman*, and then consider his own statement: 'Punk, the most important cultural movement of the seventies . . . seems to me one of the most encouraging first fruits of the comprehensive school.' You don't need to have voted Tory to wonder whether, if this is true, there is the slightest mystery about why so many parents feel that an education compatible with even very liberal and humane values is more reliably entrusted to the independent sector than to most comprehensive schools.

Danny Jamieson, Stewart Hay, Donald MacDonald, Anderson High School, Lerwick, Scotland

One gets the feeling from Colin MacCabe's article on comprehensive education (*NS* 9 Sept) that private schools are to be integrated into the state system through civilised discussion à la Robert Owen in middle-class drawing rooms up and down the country. Even if this was a desirable aim, it reads like an extract from a work of fiction and seems to avoid discussion of what is still the essence of political/educational life in our country – class conflict. Apart from the implicit assumption that they have the most to contribute to education in our community, does he seriously imagine our ruling class would be happily integrated? These schools exist precisely to perpetuate class rule and division.

Worse still is the attack on comprehensives themselves and integrated mixed ability teaching. The only way that comprehensives can begin to function successfully is through a vigorous attack on class society both inside and outside the classroom, and not through inciting the vast majority of working-class children to give up learning at 14. Certainly, as MacCabe observes, the Labour Party has failed to implement socialism, but surely that is the whole point, a point utterly obscured by his plan to assault the already struggling comprehensive system with a meat cleaver, and then unite the remains with private schools in the ascendant.

R. J. Silburn, Epsom, Surrey

I was very interested in Professor MacCabe's article on secondary education (*NS* 9 Sept.) but cannot agree with all he says.

Firstly, there is no case for abolishing the right of parents to pay for the education of their children if they want to. To do so would be a step in the direction of totalitarianism. Even if it would result in a better education for all children, it is not up to the State to impose a uniform education on all. The right of parents to choose the education they want for their children is absolute in a free society, whatever disadvantages, real or imagined, this may entail. A monopoly of education held by the State renders it vulnerable to political pressures and the theories of educational experts, who forget that schools exist to enable parents to provide their children with an education, and not to 'change society', act as the 'cradle of socialism', or to ensure that teachers have jobs.

'If you don't succeed, redefine success' is a slogan which applies to educationalists more than anyone. The comprehensive was sold to the public, as MacCabe says, because people believed it would provide a grammar school education for all. Now that it is obvious that this is not happening, we are told that the comprehensive system has succeeded in breaking down 'class barriers'. The failure to provide literate and numerate pupils is admitted, but this is now 'irrelevant', because of the visual arts. Yet this assumes that everything that needs to be taught can be taught by video or film. Surely this gives contemporary culture an inflated importance. Civilisation has been built up over many generations and no generation, not even the present one, can assume that it has all the answers, or even more answers than other generations. We are all prisoners of our age, and those of us brought up in the 20th century must lack many insights which previous ages possessed. That is why we read and study the great writers and thinkers of the past.

The Professor doesn't worry too much about literacy. Yet a Professor of English will agree, I hope, that the decay of a language is the decay of those using it. Along with the decline of writing goes the decline of reading. These developments have two results – the nation is increasingly cut off from its past, and the citizens become increasingly inarticulate. Both these trends of course place the ordinary comprehensive-schooled man and woman at a disadvantage when dealing with bureaucrats or work superiors.

He does not mention one reform which I feel should be considered – the abolition of the school leaving age. A child has the right to be taught to read, to write and to calculate, and to be given a grounding in his own nation's history, but after satisfying an examiner that this has been done he should be free to seek employment. The level of truancy in urban areas and the disruption of classes caused by resentful youngsters kept on in school against their will makes a mockery of the official school leaving age anyway.

Mrs Brenda Boughton, Oxford

Colin MacCabe's blueprint for British education has the merit of grasping the problem of the public schools. It has to be admitted that his solution would substitute in them an intellectual meritocratic élite for a social one, but this might be more than counterbalanced by the advantage of involving all the nation's children and parents together, in the first nine years of education.

I am more and more struck, as I get older, by the dreadful waste of talent and potential which our present system involves, as well as the continuing blight of non-comprehension between the two outermost wings of our society. Separating children by social class so early from one another is clearly a disaster; and in some respects as damaging for the supposed élite as for those who are excluded.

Footnote of cheer: Mr MacCabe's scheme would leave a corner free for experimental and/or progressive schools. They have contributed so much to the development of educational thinking and ought never to be swept away as accidental casualties of a plan to deal with public schools.

Strange socialist

Brian Fitzpatrick, Glasgow

I hope Derek Mahon was merely joshing when he described Karl Lüger as a socialist (*NS* 9 Sept.). British socialists in Thatcher's Britain need all the support they can get – but need we claim Viennese proto-Nazis as historical predecessors?

Lüger was a 'Christian Socialist', a member of a party which (then and now) regards Christian Democrats as softies (or 'wets' in Thatcherspeak). Indeed, Lüger would probably have heartily approved of the Leaderene.

The Christian Socialists of Vienna in 1900 (and later) adopted a particularly virulent brand of anti-Semitism. Surprisingly, evidence of this can be found in the exhibits re Lüger's election.

Might one suggest that there is a moral to be garnered from this? That four days is far short of the time necessary to do justice to the Edinburgh Festival. London editors and correspondents please take note.

Undignified

Carl Caplan, Glasgow

As a reader of the *New Statesman* and its illustrious predecessors for well over 50 years, I write to express both disgust and consternation that a journal of your reputation should descend to the publication of a 'Heartsearch' column, which is little more than a free-love facility.

Let folk find their mates – permanent or temporary – by the long-established traditional methods and reserve your columns for the balanced and dignified examination of current political and social problems.

Town hall tale

John Benington, Employment Co-ordinator, City of Sheffield Metropolitan District Council

The disappointment experienced by Ms Sheila Hill in not gaining the support of the Sheffield City Council for her theatre project is understandable (*NS*, 2 Sept.). Her commitment and enthusiasm were evident in the determined way she pressured Councillors and officers for a positive response to her request for financial asistance.

The theatre project had been approved by the MSC under the guidelines of the Community Programme, to provide an average weekly wage of £60 per week for the 17 workers. The project was to be funded for one year, but without any financial provision from the MSC for the purchase or rental of premises, or any adaptation costs. The scheme could not proceed without premises, and Ms Hill came to the City Council.

From that first approach, to the subsequent outcome of the application, members of the City Council and officers from the Departments of Planning and Design, Estates Surveyor, and Employment spent a considerable amount of time in advising Ms Hill on her application and helping in the search for premises. Some delays were unavoidable due to the necessity to clear the project with the relevant trade union (Equity minimum rates were £100 per week), and the several premises within Council ownership did not meet Ms Hill's requirements in size or location. While two properties were found, one was declared structually unsound for the purposes of the project, and the other, in private ownership, could have proved expensive to convert to a standard suitable for public performances, and would have taken some considerable time to complete.

From the information provided, it was not possible to determine the prospects of survival of

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the project. Its dependence on MSC funding implied that substantial grants would have to be secured from other sources to cover the continuing revenue costs. It seemed to Councillors and officers that long-term support or subsidy for the theatre project needed to be considered not simply in terms of employment creation (where the temporary and low-paid nature of the work caused us some concern) but also in relation to the Council's policy on community arts.

At the time when Sheila Hill approached us we had had applications from several similar community arts projects. At that stage the Council did not have any clear criteria for assessing these proposals, and the Employment Department therefore commissioned a 3-month study to examine the current situation in the city, to explore various funding sources, and to make recommendations towards the development of a coherent community arts policy.

This has now taken place, and the City Council has established a separate Community Arts Panel and is to appoint two Community Arts Officers who will provide a much needed link with the community and thus enable the Council to establish a co-ordinated response to the cultural needs of the City.

We regret the frustrations Sheila Hill experienced in trying to get help with her proposal and accept that some of this was caused by the fact that her proposal cut across the responsibilities of several departments. In future the City Council will be able to consider such applications more appropriately through its Community Arts Panel.

APEX membership

Geraldine Hackett, c/o New Statesman

No slur on the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff (APEX) was intended in my account of the problems being encountered because of the new method of selecting the general council of the TUC (Letters 26 August). Indeed, it is very difficult for all unions to ensure their membership records keep pace with the scale of job loss that has taken place in recent years.

I did overstate Apex's affiliation to the TUC by 4,000, but this only makes more certain the prospect of Apex losing its automatic place on the general council next year.

The union's membership has been badly hit by the loss of jobs in engineering. The Employment Services Division of the Manpower Services Division estimates that there were 125,000 redundancies in engineering in 1982 – 11 per cent of all employment (redundancies of fewer than 10 workers are not recorded which understates the figures).

It was not my intention to single out Apex. I took Apex as an example because it was one of the unions excluded from the general council in the old trades group system of election and it was one of the unions very much in favour of switching to a system of automatic representation.

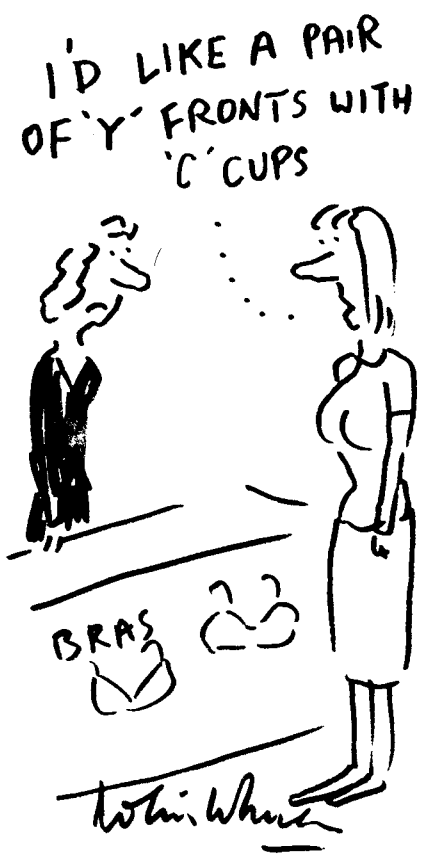
Political jokes

Steven Lukes and Itzhak Galnoor are compiling a book of political jokes. They have a rich store of Soviet, East European, Jewish, American and English jokes but would welcome political jokes from elsewhere, especially from Central America, Africa, the Far East and the Middle East (excluding Israel). Contact either of them as follows: Itzhak Galnoor, Dept of Political Science, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem 91905, Israel; Steven Lukes, Balliol College, Oxford OX1 3BJ.

And the same to you

Don Hatwell, Woodford Green, Essex

How sad that naughty Anna Coote should confuse the common metaphors about 'having balls' and 'talking a load of balls' with testicles (*NS* 16 Sept.). Does she think of nothing else? Clearly these phrases derive from pawnbroking.



Simon Partridge, London N7

It may reassure Anna Coote (*NS* 16 Sept.) – or it may not – to hear of the plumber's tale from Liverpool.

My friend in ground floor flat meets plumber descending communal stairs after mending the ball-cock of the woman upstairs. 'Cor', he says, 'she's got a right pair of top-bollocks!' Do they order things differently in Liverpool!

Architecture from inside

Louis Hellman, London W3

Having campaigned against the dogmas and worst excesses of the architectural establishment (high rise, system building, comprehensive redevelopment, etc) from the inside for 15 years, I sympathise with much of Jules Lubbock's 'In the dock' piece (*NS* 9 Sept). However, I take exception to the use of the epithet 'shoddy' to dismiss the whole profession indiscriminately and make it the scapegoat for the sickness of the society that spawned the building atrocities – the class system, political expediency and entrepreneurial greed. The majority of my fellow architects are engaged on perfectly responsible work rehabilitating the existing housing stock, both public and private, or designing small-scale, much needed community buildings. They are generally underpaid, exploited by the large offices and receive no recognition. The minority establishment, who control the Royal Institute of British Architects, are the ones who should be in the dock.

Anyone writing in a socialist paper should be aware that architecture, even more than the other arts, is a product of designer *and* client or patron, the latter's aspirations, or lack of them, being equally responsible for the results. The clients for many post-war buildings – bureaucrats or speculators – are indifferent to quality, out of touch with people's needs and ignorant of architecture. Is it any wonder that the buildings reflect this? Tower blocks accurately express the paternalistic attitudes of the councils and governments that commissioned them, utopian experiments with 'the people' as guinea pigs. The architectural establishment fell over itself to compromise its professional ideals for profit or the chance to erect monuments to its own egos, and the RIBA, instead of learning from this disastrous period, is now blatantly shedding all vestiges of ethics and standards in a desperate attempt to prostitute itself on the commercial market.

As far as the public sector goes, the link between the socialist society and large-scale housing has existed since the Constructivist images after the Russian Revolution (it is no mere chance that the discredited high-rise systems were often Scandinavian). And anyone who had gone to, say, the Gorbals in the '50s and suggested keeping the existing 'slums' would have been lynched, whether they were architects, politicians or journalists. The idea that society allowed architects to pull the wool over its eyes is nonsense. All society's self-appointed leaders, politicians and professionals alike, colluded in the affair through ignorance or indifference. I bet if Mr Lubbock wanted a house designed he would make damn sure that his architect did not offload his fantasies at *his* expense. He would also be very careful in choosing that architect.

No, the mess in which we find much of our post-war developed towns is the result of a combination of society's double standards, ill-informed and indifferent clients (architects are selected not for the quality of their work but because of their contacts), a lack of consultation with the people who are forced to use the buildings and an unwillingness by the architectural establishment and the educational system it controls, to insist on such consultation. Most people have little say over most aspects of their lives, not just their environment, and the one case where there was real participation between tenants and architects in the Liverpool co-ops, the structure was dismantled by the Labour Party when it gained power, in favour of a return to the centralised dispensing of council housing. I agree with Mr Lubbock that people taking control over their built environment is the only way to develop a decent architecture, but again it is a political and social problem as much as architectural.

What I really think

J. E. Mortimer, General Secretary, The Labour Party

Francis Beckett alleged in his article on trade union journals (*NS* 9 Sept.) that since the general election I have equated talk of professionalism in publicity matters with betrayal of the movement.

I have neither said nor implied any such thing. And what are Mr Beckett's standards of professionalism? He seems to be emulating some journalists in Fleet Street who invent stories to denigrate people in the labour movement.

In my foreword to the Labour Party's report on the general election I have expressed my views on the basic causes of our defeat. Anyone who really wants to know what I think should read the Labour Party's annual report and not the fiction of Mr Beckett.

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Paul Addison

Automatic pilot

The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell 1945-1956
ed. PHILIP WILLIAMS *Cape* £25

At intervals between 1945 and 1956 Hugh Gaitskell compiled a record of recent events as witnessed from the inside. Beginning with his election to the House of Commons, he broke off on the eve of the Suez landings, and no testament survives for the remaining six of his seven years as Leader of the Opposition. No great diarist, he scribbled or taped his account in fits and starts, often harking back over the events of two or three months, and never acquiring the knack of a Channon or a Crossman for the riveting phrase.

But regardless of style, a Gaitskell archive of some quarter of a million words must supply political historians with material for years to come. Philip Williams drew many a bucket from the well for his definitive life of Gaitskell published in 1979, and now he has produced a full edition of the text, supplemented by key memoranda and correspondence. It is hard to find choice quotations not already in the biography: but henceforth readers will have a free run of the evidence and be able to form their own impressions of Labour's past and Gaitskell's part in it.

Gaitskell was fascinated by the mechanics of power and aimed to recall systematically the meetings and manoeuvres involved. The Diary contains important narratives of Britain's financial negotiations with the United States and Western Europe in the era of the dollar gap and the Korean War, and confirms that Gaitskell resisted strong Treasury pressures for convertibility, deflation and unemployment. In domestic affairs the devaluation crisis of 1949, the split over rearmament in 1951 and the abortive attempt to expel Bevan in 1951 take pride of place as set-pieces.

Light relief appears with the arrival in London of Bulganin and Krushchev. Their discussions with Labour politicians make for grotesque black comedy, including the notorious dinner party at which George Brown succeeded in getting a rise out of Mr K. Krushchev, incidentally, rose to the challenge. When Brown raised his glass to remark: 'Here's to the big boss', Krushchev replied: 'You look like a little boss yourself.'

The Diary is particularly good on the influential figures behind the scenes of public life. There are pungent stories of Treasury officials trying to push through their policies, and if on some fronts Gaitskell resisted them, on others he came to rely on their assistance. When as Chancellor he considered the imposition of charges on teeth and spectacles, a measure certain to arouse dissent in the party, none of his friends or colleagues would utter the crucial words of encouragement. But officials 'always made clear where they thought I should stand and why they thought I should stand'.

In opposition Gaitskell, by then in pursuit of the leadership, began to woo the trade union bosses, and the Diary records how a little group of them arranged his election as Treasurer: 'Arthur Deakin told me that he

Camera Press

Never acquiring the knack

was being pressed by the AEU to vote for their nominee for the National Executive. He said he would make it quite plain to them that he would do that, but only if they nominated me for the Treasurership.' And so on. Here was an unreformed patronage system of which the Duke of Newcastle would have approved, but working in the name of democratic socialism.

Gaitskell's opinions of his fellow politicians make interesting reading in their own right, and still more as indicators of a certain cast of mind. It is quite wrong to suppose that he was impatient of all but the mandarin class of trained intellects from which he sprang. Most of all he valued the stolid, consistent moderation of a Bevin, Morrison or Griffiths, and there were overtones of deference in his references to Labour pioneers of humble origin. One can divine from his glowing descriptions of tours of the coalfields or visits to working men's clubs that he was not only flattered to be received in such quarters, but convinced that the working classes were moral force Chartists who shared his deep constitutionalism and Anglo-Saxon practicality.

His model of national character was Baldwin's and he admired the phlegmatic, Baldwinite strand in Attlee. What he could not comprehend at all was class bitterness, still less the uncontrolled release of class emotion, or the rousing of left-wing sentiment as an end in itself. After an argument with Bevan in 1948 he wrote: 'It would be much better if AB simply said that he was Welsh, he spoke as he felt, and sometimes he felt very strongly, instead of trying to make a philosophy out of the use of invective.'

Granted Gaitskell's credentials as an intellectual, the Diary yields curiously little on the analytical basis of revisionism. His editor points out that Gaitskell's underlying philosophy was settled by 1939 and required no further reflection, but a puzzle remains. In 1945 Gaitskell was still arguing that the goal of a classless society was only to be obtained through state planning and public ownership. By 1956 he was plainly in accord with the Croslandite thesis that capitalism was now transformed to the point at which equality – which Gaitskell continued to stress as the principal aim – could be realised through social and fiscal policy.

Gaitskell was consistent in the sense that his flight-path took him further and further away from Marxism, but the transition of ideas was considerable. The Diary suggests that after 1945 Gaitskell was simply too busy thinking out the next move to worry about first principles, and left them on automatic pilot. Electoral considerations were an important determinant in leading him away from state socialism, and Williams has done well to include a cogent memorandum arguing for a cut-and-run election in November 1949. Crosland was left with the task of framing a retrospective rationale to explain the new course.

Gaitskell's evolution paralleled the dominant trend in the Labour movement of the late 1940s, but brought him into collision with Bevan. Attlee and Gaitskell together goaded Bevan into revolt, the former by passing over his just claims to promotion, the latter by pinning him to the wall over Health Service finance. Though ultimately the rift was healed, and Bevan and Gaitskell joined forces over Suez, the 1955 election had been thrown away in the meantime and lasting wounds inflicted. The episode illustrates the perils of a Cold War mentality in Labour politics.

The defence of Western Europe against Russia is a necessity, as Bevan fully recognised; but the fear of reds-under-the-bed easily develops into the prejudice against all unorthodox opinion and leads to a narrow conformity of ideas. The crime of Aneurin Bevan was that he was only 95% sound on the Cold War and failed to pass the loyalty tests devised by Gaitskell. While Bevan was

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a great realist in his handling of power, his imagination was truly radical and teemed with intuitions of a more spacious and generous world. He rattled the bars of the cage and sought for some wizardry to remove them.

Gaitskell won, but the conflict reflected no credit on him. In justice to Bevan it has to be said that even as the villain of the piece in these diaries, raging like a wounded bull at party meetings, he stands out as a genius where Gaitskell was merely a man of very great ability. Until recently the Labour Party has never lacked realists to instruct it in the facts of the matter and the limits of power. Nor has it lacked millenarians, convinced that if only the trumpet sounds from on high, the reign of the saints will begin.

Bevan was unique as a practical visionary and it was extraordinary that Gaitskell should liken him, as a demagogue, to Hitler. Of course Bevan was not slain by Gaitskell alone: the spirit of the age was against him. But times have changed, and Gaitskellism is no longer enough. The Labour Party has somehow to bring Bevan to life again, or perish from its internal contradictions and the indifference of the electorate. □

FICTION
Roger Lewis

Shazam!

Shame
SALMAN RUSHDIE *Cape* £7.95
Perfect Happiness
PENELOPE LIVELY *Heinemann* £7.95
Unfinished Business
BARRY HINES *Michael Joseph* £7.95

'All stories are haunted by the ghosts of stories they might have been.' Salman Rushdie's **Shame,** however, invites as many spectres to the feast as it can. Pakistan, the book's nominal setting, is a place of macabre goonery whose history occasions a novelistic bag of tricks. Rushdie has ignored a writer's self-regulating process of discrimination and instead provided a tale which has to keep turning back the clocks to catch up with its own narrative. In *Shame,* characters killed off turn up on video-recorders in order to explain themselves, realistic plots dilate into symbols, and at the end the powers of the supernatural become a universal chaos which covers all.

The first thing we must do with this upturned beehive of a book is cast off the ruling notion that conceived it. To make Raza Hyder a cipher for President Zia ul-Haq and Isky Harapps a version of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is to make *Shame* dwindle into political allegory. There is more imaginative work to be done than this. It is a novel less about history than the impossibility of writing a history. Facts, because they tend to refer to events consigned to the past, have to jostle in the memory with fictions and wish-fulfilments which might well get the upper hand: 'I build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist.'

Though he pretends that the book exfoliates as we read it, like the rambles of Tristram Shandy, Rushdie is really proceeding with extreme cunning. The most carefully planned elements are the supposed ad libs, the embarrassing interjections. Italicised, the spiteful ranklings of real-life Pakistanis erupt into the text: *'Outsider, trespasser . . . what can you tell but lies?'* Writing a history is trepidatious because its facts will compete with other people's versions of them. By degrees, therefore, Rushdie permits history to become a fiction and justifies himself with a writer's awe: 'My story, my fictional country exist, like myself, at a slight angle to reality . . . My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan.'

Pakistan's rival is the passion with which Rushdie tells stories about it. We begin with an overture about Omar Khayyam Shakil, a character who, like the novelist's image of himself, is more of an observer than a participant: 'a fellow who is not even the hero of his own life'. Reared by a triumvirate of mothers who have sequestered themselves from the world in a phantasmagoric palace, Omar discovers a vast library and autodidactically absorbs its riches. What he never solves, however, is the mystery of his parentage. The three sisters who minister to him have merged into a single personality. His father is unknown: he was conceived at a party held to herald the beginning of the triad's anchoritic life. During the pregnancy two of the sisters developed phantom symptoms in sympathy with their other sister's shame. Chunni, Munnee and Bunny, it is rumoured, resolved to share their baby in a pact signed with menstrual blood.

Omar does not descend into the real world until the age of twelve. Having been cocooned by his mother, the first sensation which assails him as he stops into the jeering crowd is shame: *'Sharam . . . shin re mim* – a short word but one containing encyclopaedias of nuance'. The remainder of the novel is an investigation of the guises this word takes.

Principally, we enter the families of Rama and Isky. They are linked by the peripheral Omar: he marries the daughter of one and is fellow profligate with the other. Bilquis, Raza's wife, is accused of shaming her family because she cannot conceive. When she does she shames her husband by not giving him a son. Sufiya Zinobia grows up to be a repository of shame: she blushes deeply when detecting dissension around her. When her cheeks begin to glow like fire, she collapses with a brain fever and becomes a simpleton. In doing so she compounds the shame of her proud parents. Isky's daughter is called 'the virgin ironpants' because she refuses to acknowledge that she is a girl. Her feminine body 'brings a person nothing but babies, pinches and shame'.

Nevertheless, it is women who come to dominate what Rushdie imagined would be a male epic. They are the powers behind the thrones: sources of constancy whilst dictators rise and fall. Rani Harappa betrays unearthly powers in the omniscient designs on the shawls she embroiders. Sufiya Zinobia, the idiot child, absorbs the unvoiced hates, prejudices and grudges of her country and becomes demonic. She is a Holy Fool who, instead of taking away the sins of the world, unleashes them on those who'd commit them. She is a beauty who contains a beast.

'My dictator will be toppled by goblinish, faery means', says Rushdie as his novel prepares for a hallucinogenic ending. Throughout he has played games with the incidents in his story and pretends that the tricks are caused by sprites in his truculent material: 'a plague on this disobedient Time. I command this death scene back into the wings at once: shazam!' He is an Oriental fabulist. Like Scheherazade, there is enough in *Shame* for a thousand and one nights.

Back to earth for the week's other novels: **Perfect Happiness** is about the memories with which certain landscapes are charged. The bereaved Frances has to redefine what always seemed familiar now that her high-flying husband has died. Perfect happiness is found to lie only in the memory of a chance incident, suddenly recalled as untroubled. Though a melancholy novel, it ends with the reconstruction of personality, not its disassembly.

Barry Hines's **Unfinished Business**

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concerns a beleaguered wife, on the cusp of 30, deciding to relegate her family to second place whilst she studies for an English degree. We explore the conflict between domestic responsibility, imprisoning though it is, and the improvement of the mind – an intangible, poncified notion her boorish husband can barely stomach. Lucy discovers sensations akin to the intimations felt by the boy in *Kes* when he came within reach of owning a falcon. □

BIOGRAPHY
Christopher Hitchens

Doing good

Benjamin Franklin: A Biography
RONALD W. CLARK *Weidenfeld* £18.50

It is at least arguable that Cotton Mather was one of the most unappetising of the early Americans. He was a moral bully, a witch-hunter and a tract-thumping bore. He was also the author of a pious work entitled *Bonifacius*, better known as *Essays to Do Good*. This unpromisingly titled book had a considerable effect on the young Benjamin Franklin, who wrote to the young Mather in the following suggestive terms:

> I have always set a greater value on the character of a *doer of good* than on any other kind of reputation and if I have been, as you seem to think, a useful citizen, the public owes the advantage of it to that book.

What? Ben Franklin as an admirer of the Falwell tradition? It is the achievement of Ronald Clark to show that his hero was a highly reluctant insurrectionist, and that other people would follow him and take their duty from him precisely because they knew he was 'sound'. Such men make excellent revolutionaries. The 'do-gooder', so much scorned by élitists of all stripes, is often the man of inflexible principle and surprising endurance. Franklin, for instance, fought as long as was decent against a separation of the American colonies from the British crown. He sincerely felt that such a breach would be disastrous. But, when the stupidity of the King and his advisors made it inevitable, the rupture had no stronger advocate than Franklin himself.

One of the best drawn passages in this very well-crafted book has Franklin appearing before the Privy Council on 29 January 1774. Edmund Burke was in the audience, as was Jeremy Bentham. Franklin, who had offered to pay for the costs of the Boston Tea Party out of his own pocket, was made the sport of various teak-headed Tory bear-baiters. Alexander Wederburn, the Solicitor-General, then slammed the door on American aspirations. He spoke with what one witness described as 'the energy of a bold, bad man who saw a coronet glittering in the eager eyes of the magnates whom he addressed'. Franklin declined to be examined as a witness in such a phoney proceeding, held his peace and became convinced that separation was the only course open to his fellows. It is, more often than not, this kind of contribution that earns British conservatives their tiny niche in history.

Franklin has been called 'The First American' (in the sense of originality rather than primacy) but one may doubt the value or accuracy of such a title. America was ready for independence without desiring it – in contrast, some would say, to later colonies. Yet, when it moved towards self-government, it wrote itself a charter more revolutionary than its bourgeois and mercantile character might have suggested. Again, Benjamin Franklin was to the fore. It seems that he changed the phrasing of the Declaration of Independence from 'sacred and undeniable' truths to 'self-evident' ones; a nuance but not a negligible one. (It is a deficiency of this biography that it gives insufficient weight to the influence of Tom Paine, who first used the phrase 'United States of America' and who fought to keep slavery and discrimination out of the documents of the Founding Fathers.)

From conciliator, Franklin soon turned to arms-smuggler. Wags might say that he was the model of American pragmatism in this respect. At any rate, his time as envoy to Paris was an enthralling one, providing most of the salacious rumour upon which British monarchist propaganda was to base itself. His period in France was also a return to the scene of his earliest vindication – as a pioneer scientist. It may be an exaggeration to say that Franklin discovered electricity, but it would be true to say that he recognised its positive and negative essence and demonstrated the errors of those who knew of it but misunderstood it. He fell athwart the religious authorities for this heresy, but was undismayed by their foolishness.

The British, it is amusing to discover, were convinced that Franklin had 'tamed the lightning' in order to deploy it against His Majesty King George. One of Lord Stormont's spies reported from France that Franklin was preparing a vast apparatus of mirrors with which to harness the sun and burn up the British fleet while it lay in port:

> During the conflagration the Doctor proposes to have a chain carried from Calais to Dover. He, standing at Calais, with a prodigious electrical machine of his own invention, will convey such a shock as will entirely overturn our whole island.

In fact, Franklin's years in Paris were years in which the American Revolution was fighting for its very life. Ronald Clark describes very vividly the day-to-day diplomacy by which Franklin convinced the French that his cause was worth their support.

This is an excellent biography, well up to the standards of his earlier study of Bertrand Russell. Clark is at home with ideas, and with scientific concepts, and writes with ease and humour. This is just the right blend of sympathy for the present subject. The notion of the 'do-gooder', so much reviled by reactionaries, is here embodied in the person of Franklin and reinstated where it belongs at the heart of the American liberal tradition. □

ENVIRONMENT
Bob Woffinden

Hard times

Inside the Inner City
PAUL HARRISON *Penguin* £3.95

As many readers will have noticed, this book has already generated considerable media interest. It is a searching examination of the plight of the underprivileged in Britain's inner cities during the current economic crisis, and has been fashioned almost entirely from research conducted within the London borough of Hackney (where I live), which hasn't enjoyed as much publicity for years.

Enjoyed? I meant to say endured. An item on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, and an article in *The Times* by Gerald Kaufman, fostered the impression that Hackney was the last place anyone would wish to live. Kaufman referred to it as 'a no-go area for almost all except those compelled to remain there'.

There were, inevitably, rejoinders, not least because for some years a middle-class tide has been seeping into the borough from neighbouring areas like Islington. There are now enough journalists living here to staff a TUC newspaper, and several promptly put pen to paper to defend Hackney. Conversely, there was the inevitable *Times* letter pointing out that this situation was all one could expect from 50 years of Labour domination of municipal politics.

Thus were the parameters of the debate drawn up. (The last word so far has been a genuinely eccentric piece, again in *The Times*; if I read it correctly, this proposed lentil soup and black-and-white TV sets as the cure for Hackney's ills.)

It is an instructive case, demonstrating how a work which seeks to rectify misconceptions has itself become the victim of one. The book's intention was to stimulate consideration of the fate of those caught in the new poverty trap. Instead, with the exception of a *Sunday Times* editorial, discussion has focused on whether or not life in Hackney is necessarily that intolerable. Clearly it isn't – so the book itself is invalidated. The case for the inarticulate of our society remains unheard.

To some extent, Harrison has only himself to blame. He does make it clear that his case histories are representative not of those living in Hackney, but of the underprivileged who live in inner cities; and on the book's cover he carefully eschews all mention of Hackney. He does, however, solemnly dedicate it to the people of the borough, and he is guilty of some wild

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overstatements. Routine journeys on the 38 bus are blithely rendered as 'harrowing odysseys on public transport'. (In fact, Harrison is singularly ill-informed about local transport facilities.)

The more the reader thinks 'Hackney', the more the force of this book is diminished, for its portrait of life in the borough is far from complete (few references to gentrification, virtually none to the thriving black economy). *Inside the Inner City* is actually about the human costs of recession and monetarist economics. There is an underclass developing in our society; people who have been stripped of their livelihood, dignity and, in some cases, their will to live; whose financial and spiritual resources are equally drained. The possibility of escape, of upward mobility, is non-existent. These are the folk without electoral muscle, without access to the media, without leverage of any kind. As a general rule, writes Harrison, the more a particular group of people needs justice or reform or resources, the less it is equipped to fight for them. He thus acts as the mouthpiece for all those dumb victims of the depredations of Thatcherism, and depicts the sad, sad lives behind the increasingly unshocking statistics.

In post-war years the nation has flirted with some cosy myths: that poverty has been eradicated; that we live in a welfare state; or that Britain is a classless society. Conditions of life today for many in the inner cities illustrate just how absurd those notions now are. Industrial decline and the withdrawal of amenities have occurred simultaneously. Particular areas have been locked into a spiral of decay. Showcase estates become dump estates; policing methods exacerbate the law and order problem; schools fail to educate. If the deprived don't turn to crime, they become its victims: 'When the blitz was on', comments one pensioner, 'we'd be running down streets with bombs dropping and burning timbers falling, but I was never as scared as I am now'.

I don't believe this was an easy book to write. The facts of inner-city deprivation would appear to be well known; but Harrison, who makes the point that the average Tory MP has no first-hand conception of inner-city need, strives to show how an already appalling situation is remorselessly deteriorating.

The remedy, of course, must lie in a series of carefully interlocked local and national initiatives. On a local level in Hackney, there have been some encouraging developments: a return to some form of community policing; the appointment of energetic and enlightened heads to certain schools; and some improvements in health care provision. We await the national initiatives.

I'm bound to say that I think *Inside the Inner City* is too long. Paul Theroux's new book about Britain refers to the 'compassion fatigue' of Northern Ireland, and this work is in danger of inducing a similarly enervated response. However, its exhaustive analysis makes it a fitting documentary companion to Alan Bleasdale's *The Boys from the Black Stuff*, and there's no higher praise than that. □

The Oxford Book of Narrative Verse

Chosen and edited by Iona and Peter Opie

This is a story-book, 'a book of tales of various kinds, romantic, humorous, ghostly, and gory, written over the past six hundred years.' *The Rape of the Lock*, the *Ancient Mariner*, the *Lady of Shalott* and *The Pied Piper; The Hunting of the Snark, John Gilpin*, and many others are given in their entirety, and there are extracts from book-length poems like *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*. £8.95

The Oxford Book of Dreams

Chosen by Stephen Brook

This anthology explores the dream in literature, from pre-Christian times to the present day. Wonderful descriptions of dreams, recorded by such avid collectors as Ruskin and Southey, A. C. Benson and Kafka, share these pages with their fictional and poetic counterparts. The subject is quite as entertaining in its literature as it is universal in its appeal. £8.95 *6 October*

Consciousness Regained

Chapters in the Development of Mind

Nicholas Humphrey

Nicholas Humphrey has brought together a selection of his essays about the human condition. His spirited writing throws light into areas which academic psychology and philosophy have failed to reach. In particular he confronts the phenomenon of consciousness, which has long been an embarrassment to the leading intellectual orthodoxies, and helps to regain for serious study this most basic if perplexing of subjects. Illustrated £12.95

The Complete Clerihews of E. Clerihew Bentley

Revised edition

To this marvellous collection has been added a variety of extra material brought to light after the publication of the first edition. The illustrations are by C. J. Chesterton, Nicolas Bentley, Victor Reinganum, and the author, and Gavin Ewart introduces the book. £2.95 *Oxford Paperbacks*

Other People's Clerihews

Chosen by Gavin Ewart

Many famous figures have tried their hand at the clerihew, and here are the collected attempts of W. H. Auden, Edmund Wilson, James Elroy Flecker, Terence Tiller, Peter Porter, John Sparrow, Frank Muir, Spike Hughes, and others. Illustrated by Nicola Jennings. £5.95

The Oxford Companion to the Theatre

Edited by Phyllis Hartnoll

Since 1967, when the third edition was published, theatre throughout the world has undergone a series of changes swifter and more far-reaching than at any other time in its history. This new fourth edition still provides a solid survey of the subjects, but offers more information on contemporary writers, directors, players, companies and theatres. £20

BBC Pronouncing Dictionary of British Names

Edited by Graham Pointon

Although the myth of 'BBC English' has been largely dissipated in the twelve years since the first edition of this handy and authoritative dictionary appeared, the BBC maintains a policy of avoiding solecism or offence by ascertaining the pronunication of personal and place names by reference to the bearers of the name or the inhabitants of the place. Here are over 20,000 examples. Second edition £6.95

John Clare's Autobiographical Writings

Edited by Eric Robinson

The story of John Clare's life has never been told more vividly or with greater poignancy than by Clare himself, and in this volume Eric Robinson has brought together snatches of autobiography to create a compelling narrative. The introduction establishes the unique character of Clare's genius, and the illustrations by John Lawrence enhance the text. £7.95

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Peter Scupham

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Oxford University Press

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Selected autumn and winter books

The books listed below are a selection from those which publishers hope to issue between now and the end of March. Some prices are provisional. Titles already announced are not included.

Fiction

BRIAN ALDISS **Helliconia Summer** *Cape* £8.50
ANTONIO LOBO ANTUNES **South of Nowhere** *Chatto* £7.95 & £3.50
TRUMAN CAPOTE **One Christmas** *Hamish Hamilton* £6.95
LEN DEIGHTON **Berlin Game** *Hutchinson* £8.95
J. P. DONLEAVY **Leila: Further in the Life and Destinies of Darcy Dancer, Gentleman** *Allen Lane* £8.95
AUTRAN DOURADO **Pattern for a Tapestry** *Peter Owen* £7.95
MAUREEN DUFFY **Londoners** *Methuen* about £7.95
LAWRENCE DURRELL **Sebastian or Special Tastes** *Faber* £7.95
PENELOPE GILLIATT **Mortal Matters** *Macmillan* £8.50
JAMES HANLEY **What Farrar Saw and Other Stories** *Deutsch* about £7.95
ROY K. HEATH **Orealla** *Allison & Busby* £8.95
SUSAN HILL **The Woman in Black** *Hamish Hamilton* £7.95
NEIL JORDAN **The Dream of a Beast** *Chatto* £6.95 & £2.95
MOLLY KEANE **Time After Time** *Deutsch* £7.95
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HENRY LIVINGS **Pennine Tales** *Methuen* about £4.95
GEORGE MacBETH **Anna's Book** *Cape* £7.95
SHENA MACKAY **Babies in Rhinestones and Other Stories** *Heinemann* £7.95
ADAM MARS-JONES (Ed.) **Mae West Is Dead: Recent Lesbian and Gay Fiction** *Faber* £10 & £3.95
MICHAEL MOORCOCK **The Russian Intelligence** *NEL* £7.95
BRIAN MOORE **Cold Heaven** *Cape* £7.95
ABERTO MORAVIA **1934** *Secker* £8.50
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ANTHONY HOWELL **Notions of a Mirror** *Anvil Press* £3.95
CLIVE JAMES **Poem of the Year** *Cape* £5.50
GEORGE MacBETH **The Long Darkness** *Secker* £5.50
WILFRED OWEN **The Complete Poems and Fragments**, edited by Jon Stallworthy *Chatto/Oxford* 2 vols £50
JEREMY REED **By the Fisheries** *Cape* £3.95
MICHAEL SCHMIDT (Ed.) **Some Contemporary Poets of Britain and Ireland** *Carcanet* £9.95
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Stevie Smith: A Selection

ed. HERMIONE LEE *Faber* £8.50 & £3.50

One of the nicest things about this edition is the liberal inclusion of prose and drawings. Stevie Smith drew with brevity and flair; and her wry, deadpan, ironical little sketches complement her odd-angled poetry. They're enigmatic like her verse, often baffling the reader: is this pure silliness, a clever inversion of commonsense, or an odd perspective on things that is really very interesting? For example: 'Aloft,/In the loft,/Sits Croft;/He is soft.' End. *Fin.* This is silly, but next to these lines is a lovely little sketch. Croft looks like an androgynous loner in pyjamas, and the effect, though slight, is whimsical, entertaining.

This kind of effect – where Stevie Smith is only sketching with words – is the thin end of her very considerable scope and talent. At the other end is an ambiguous and compressed poetry of substance. She has a knack for turning the known into something strange, the strange into something comic; but the *piquant* perception is never allowed to become cosy. There is a strong, ominous edge to her way of seeing that threatens to surface, marking the borderline between comedy and the grotesque, establishing their kinship, and looking at that closeness with a quizzical stare. Bland rhyme and rhythm beguile the reader, but usually there is a suspicious simplicity about her lines that looks faintly fake. And at a second glance the poem looks distinctly ironic; the reader reads by stages.

Smith's poems tend to double meaning. 'Ceux qui luttent' (*luttent*=struggle) is a wry poem that refers to the survival of the emotionally tough: 'And down here they luttent a very great deal indeed./But if life be the desideratum, why grieve, ils vivent.' There's a subtle deprecation of life (mere survival, not happiness) as the object of living – and a second implicit question: at such a cost (toughness, endurance) is, well, *vivre* (her French is a kind of irony) worth it anyway?

Stevie Smith gets cross about a lot of things, but it's a deeply felt, emotionally respectable anger. Her targets are many, in particular small-minded hypocrisy. She is also straighforwardly witty, as when a wife tells her husband that death is 'a great reunion for which life's but the preparation'. This appals him: 'What do you mean, Maria?' he cries, 'It can't be true there's no rest/ From one's uncles and brothers and sisters nor even the wife of one's breast.' 'It is true', comes the unsympathetic reply. Certainly, Stevie Smith was able to look at things with a difference. And the image of a scatty peripheral eccentric must be finally dispelled by Hermione Lee's excellent introduction.

Kathy O'Shaughnessy

October publication

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FIRE

a new novel by Alice Thomas Ellis

'She has mapped out a territory uniquely hers.'
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October

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD *Methuen* £12.50

Richard Willson

'For me, born so late in the summer', writes Christopher Isherwood, 'autumn is my spring.' *October* is the diary he kept for October 1979 and, among other things, it is a tribute to the month in which his creative imagination is stimulated anew as the clouds gather over the Pacific shore near his home. October is a creative time also for Isherwood's lover and companion of many years, Don Bachardy. During it Bachardy does 32 portraits of friends and neighbours and these accompany the text.

Isherwood's writing in *October* is, as elsewhere, a remarkable compound of sense, sensibility and silliness. By silliness I mean the irresponsible articulation of whimsies as if they were something better. During the majority of days in October – as, I suspect, during *any* month of the year – Isherwood muses and then writes about homosexuality. (What would he have done without this subject? His identity and his sexuality are more completely fused than is the case with any other novelist except Genet.) He shows great sense when addressing fellow-gays, he writes: 'Whether we like it or not, our unique act of self-expression is a sexual act.' He shows the sensibility – and the courage – of the author of that masterpiece, *A Single Man*, when he describes the feelings of an ageing homosexual who still identifies with the young; and when he records his continuing love for Don Bachardy and his fears of the coming-round of another difficult time for gays. But against these passages must be set a great deal of foolish and embarrassing stuff. 'Beautiful boys with long hair' remind him of 'young barbarians, riding out of the primeval forest to rape us, we hope.' And what about this, of his young semi-hustler friend Rick?

> Rick called me on the phone this morning, and asked, 'Chris, would you possibly happen to know what the German is for *I love you* . . .' [He] needed it for a story he is writing – a sado-masochistic fantasy, I believe, about a Jew having sex with a Nazi in a concentration camp.

Isherwood knows all about Nazis; he was one of the first Engligh writers to portray them. What would the young diarist of *Goodbye to Berlin* have made of this celluloid attitude to brutality, by this half-mystical, half-consumerist dissolution of good and evil? Or was a culpable softness really there in Isherwood from the very first?

Paul Binding

The Gene Business

EDWARD YOXEN *Pan* £3.95

If you think micro-electronics are changing the world, you haven't seen anything yet. The chip can be used to alter the way people work, the number who work, and their patterns of leisure, power and knowledge; but people are still people however they spend their time. Yoxen's book, one of a valuable series in conjunction with Channel 4's *Crucible* science series, shows that biotechnology is coming up fast as a force to alter far more fundamental aspects of human, animal and plant life.

Biotechnology is based upon academic discoveries about genetics and microbiology, mostly made in the 1960s. Like the rest of the argument, these are unpacked with remarkable clarity by Yoxen in *The Gene Business*. These discoveries have led to a clutch of far-reaching techniques centered upon methods of introducing genetic material from one species into another. The genetic content of species is carefully preserved in nature: altering it opens the route to mass production of food, drugs and chemicals by bacteria, to new medical and agricultural techniques and ultimately to modification of human life itself.

The biotechnology industry consists at the moment of a host of small firms, mostly having just one good idea (generally developed with public money) as the founders' hope of getting rich quick with a spectacular share issue, or by being bought out by the larger firms which are now taking an interest in biotechnology. Yoxen shows how normal scientific standards have (along with preliminary attempts at public control) been the first victims of this potential bonanza.

To follow later on, if controls proposed by Yoxen fail, is everything from traditional medicine, agriculture and industry to the laws of property, inheritance and identity. The scope of biotechnology exceeds by a hundredfold almost any problem now in the political centre stage; Yoxen's book is a good guide to the issues and how they might develop.

Martin Ince

Between Ourselves: Letters Between Mothers And Daughters

ed. KAREN PAYNE *Michael Joseph* £12.95

As clues to biographical truth letters are apt to be unreliable. Even in the most intimate correspondence motives and meanings are rarely transparent. Undaunted, this collection throws

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itself open as a wide window on the world of women's concerns over more than two centuries, on the assumption that what's written between mothers and daughters will supply the most candid picture and give us further insights into that primary relationship.

In assembling her letters Karen Payne has made prodigious efforts to represent the range of women's experience at its most extreme as well as in its everyday features. So we find a hunger striker in Armagh Jail writing to her mother; an Iranian exile urging hers to follow her; valedictory messages from women about to face a Nazi firing squad. Correspondents found through newspaper appeals rub shoulders with the illustrious – with George Sand, Olive Schreiner and Sylvia Plath.

Fascinating though these letters are, for the most part they afford only minute glimpses of lives and relationships whose complexities are left to speculation. Many of them barely allude to emotional preoccupations, and the relationship between mother and daughter can scarcely be deduced from a mere handful of letters, however intimate. In the case of some well-known women there's only a single letter, framed by a biographical sketch. I wondered by what criterion – other than the commercial – Queen Victoria had earned a place in the 19th-century company of women under the heading 'Dangerous Dreams'.

There are noteworthy exceptions that do offer some depth of insight, like the letters between a young educated feminist and her working-class mother who is in the painful throes of ending her marriage – which present the most sustained correspondence in the book, and certainly the most illuminating. And there is the recurring theme of the tension between the claims of domesticity and an outward-looking identity – as well as a reminder that the making of choices between them is something now possible for many more women than it was a century ago, although still painful.

But the book has no coherence; there's too much material and too few threads to bind it together. And for all the mass of epistolary evidence this is hardly a representative haul in terms of its social range. Who writes letters these days? It's significant that *Between Ourselves* contains a preponderance of professional writers.

Liz Heron

The Flutes of Autumn
PETER LEVI *Harvill* £7.95

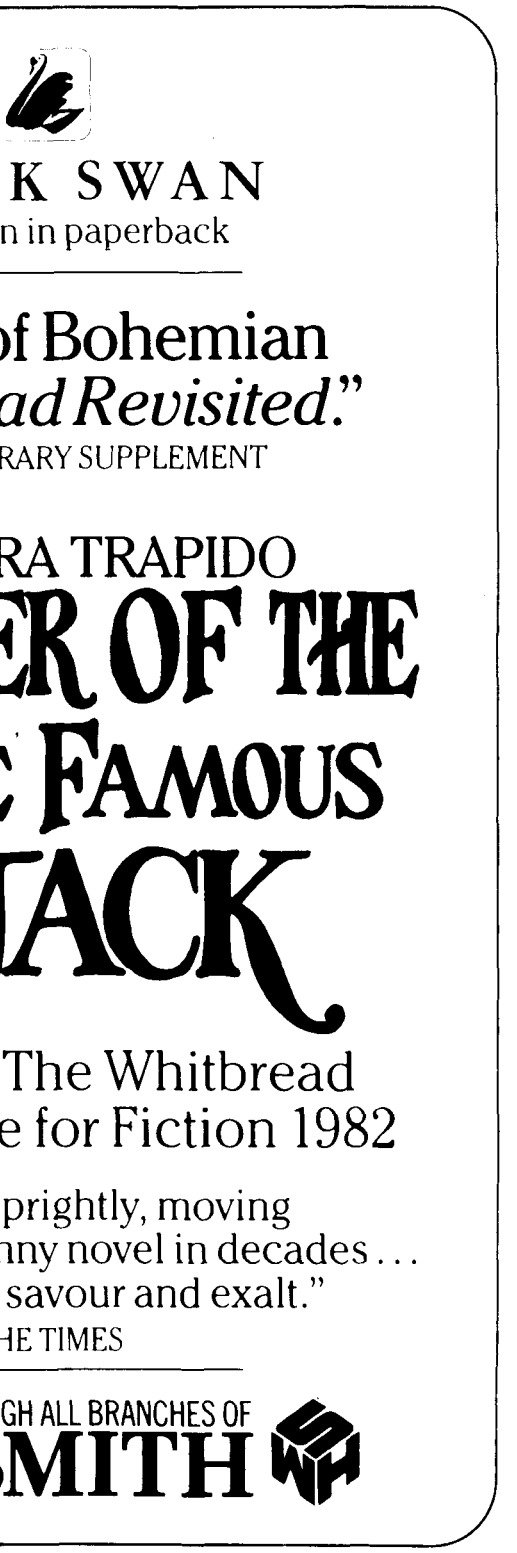
If Peter Levi's brief autobiography is anything to go by, the antiquarian spirit is alive and well and flourishing in North Oxfordshire, where he now lives. In his early 50s, and a Fellow of St Catherine's College, Oxford, Mr Levi is well-known as a poet, a classical scholar, a translator, an authoritative enthusiast on Greece, and an ex-Jesuit priest of London Jewish origin (his family had connections with the carpet trade). Those who turn to *The Flutes of Autumn* for a gossipy, blow-by-blow literary or academic or priestly autobiography will, however, be disappointed: the members of his family remain shadowy figures; for insights into his long love affair and eventual marriage he refers us to his poetry; of his development as a poet or his religious life he has little to say, explicitly at least.

What he does tell us about, however, is his long and passionate discovery of, and involvement with, the landscape of Britain and the history it embodies – which he compares to an open book crying out to be read, the pages of which he has been deciphering with scrupulous but vividly imagined fascination as a suburban child, at a public-school staffed by ferocious and patriotic Irish Christian Brothers, as a student in Oxford, as a schoolmaster at Stonyhurst, and on his ever-widening travels through England, Wales and Scotland. Mr Levi grew up in Ruislip, still surprisingly rural before the war. (He has a rather elderly but effective way of reminding us of how different life was when he was younger, as a result of which even the Fifties sound as remote as the world of Flora Thompson.) As a child he became aware of the dimly discerned traces of earlier examples of Ruislip Man beneath the public library and the Great West Road; and it's his growing, and horrified, sense of the continuity (and savagery) of life as it has been led in these islands that provides his book with its unifying thread.

For Levi, Britain's past is 'almost too bad to be meditated': it is one in which 'wave after wave of invaders hacked one another pieces'; in which the fierce, magnificent culture of the Anglo-Saxons was destroyed by the Normans, to be followed in their turn by those of the Welsh, the Irish, the Scots and – looking further afield – the North American Indians; in which an old man of Levi's acquaintance recalled how his grandfather had been hanged from the clock tower of Windsor Castle for stealing an animal from the Great Park; and each stage of Levi's career triggers off a fresh access of melancholy about the beauty of these islands, and the sadness of their history.

At times, it must be said, his more gnomic utterances are rather hard to follow; he should know better than to spell the Aran Islands like the Earl of Arran; and it's hard to credit that, erudite as he obviously is, he could have taken in *Das Kapital* 'almost at a sitting', finding it 'easy-going and well argued' (presumably he has the *Manifesto* in mind?). But, minor quibbles apart, this is an arresting and unusual book.

Jeremy Lewis



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ART BOOKS
John Spurling

Catching fleas

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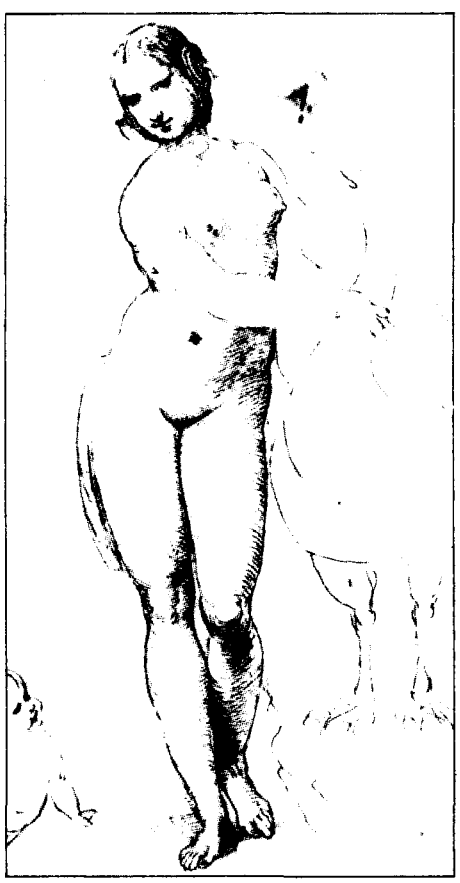
> 'Cattle and a shepherd, by Albert Cuyp, the best I ever saw of him; . . . but the employment which he has given the shepherd in his solitude is not very poetical: it must, however, be allowed to be truth and nature; he is catching fleas or something worse.'

Sir Joshua Reynolds' low opinion of the Dutch art of description introduces Svetlana Alpers' pleasantly polemical book on the subject. Her attack is directed equally at Reynolds (and those like him) for whom description is an inferior kind of art and at those modern art historians who, tacitly sharing Reynolds' view, have tried to improve Dutch art with hidden meanings. Behind lies a bigger target: 'To a remarkable extent the study of art and its history has been determined by the art of Italy and its study.' And in case this should all seem to be a rather dry and distant quarrel, Professor Alpers quotes male chauvinist remarks by Goethe and (probably) Michelangelo which suggest that an art based like that of Italy on idealism and mathematics is intrinsically superior to one based on observation in the same way as the shaping male mind is superior to the merely reacting female habit of attention. Michelangelo, it's true, if the remark is really his, did not confine his scorn to women but included also 'the devout . . . monks . . . and certain noblemen who have no sense of true harmony' as the proper audience for painting 'done without reason or art, without symmetry or proportion, without skilful choice or boldness and, finally, without substance or vigour'.

Raphael's copy of Leonardo's *Leda*



Alpers proceeds to demonstrate with great vigour, substance, reason and proportion that the science of observation as practised by the Dutch is quite as admirable as the Italian tradition and quite as central to its period and to the opening up of the modern world as were the contemporary mapmakers, educators, documentary historians and experimental scientists – all those, in fact, who, eschewing the poetical, set themselves to 'catching fleas or something worse'. The book is a thoroughly refreshing reappraisal and although the two greatest Dutch artists, Vermeer and Rembrandt, were not straightforward observers, Alpers is not such a narrow polemicist as to deny their particularity in order to suit her thesis. The fact that the reader emerges understanding them both better is a measure of the value of approaching Dutch art without an Italian bias.

James Hall's and Lawrence Wright's books are for unrepentant Italians. Hall's is divided into short sections which can either be read consecutively or used for reference. Starting with Etruscans, Greeks and Romans and studiously avoiding questions of style, form or merit, the book ends with the decline of Italian art in the 18th century; one had hoped, unreasonably, to have the obscure symbols of the latest Italian school (Chia, Clemente etc.) explained with the same steady dispassion as Hall brings, for instance, to the singular case of the Portuguese martyr-princess Wilgefortis, known in England as Uncumber. Her myth – for she never existed – grew out of a popular pilgrims' crucifix showing the bearded Christ wearing an ankle-length tunic with a long girdle. But why the beard? Because Wilgefortis was a secret Christian, sworn to virginity and forcibly betrothed to a pagan prince of Sicily. So, in answer to her prayers, she grew a beard, was rejected by her suitor and crucified by her angry father. The bearded Christ himself, of course, is a Byzantine regal image, since in the catacombs he is either a clean-shaven Graeco-Roman youth with short, curly hair or a version, with long hair, of Apollo and Dionysus.

Hall's demystification of content is parallelled by Wright's of form. Wright is an

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architectural artist of long experience who proposes to admit us all – even women, monks and noblemen – to the arcana of mathematical art. His tone is sometimes a little superior and pedagogical, but there is no corner of the subject he doesn't explore and explain with great patience and some wit.

The greatest master of perspective in painting was Raphael. 'To Raphael', says Wright, 'perspective was an adjunct under complete control, handled with seemingly effortless confidence'. Roger Jones's and Nicholas Penny's sumptuously illustrated monograph reveals as far as possible some of the effort that lay behind the confidence – including, of course, Raphael's continuing study of Leonardo and Michelangelo. Discussing Raphael's debt to Leonardo in several of his more violent frescoes, Jones and Penny write: 'Leonardo, interestingly, was in Rome when Raphael was completing these frescoes, living in the Belvedere, taming lizards and experimenting with varnishes'. The thought of Leonardo wasting his time and talent had not occurred to me before, but if ever there was an artist who used his to the last second and degree it was Raphael – painter, draughtsman, architect, antiquarian, wheeler-dealer and assiduous lover.

His temperamental opposite, Caravaggio, embraced, as Alpers recognises, 'an essentially descriptive pictorial mode'. He was also, as Howard Hibbard admits, a poor hand at perspective. Yet he worked in the Italian narrative tradition, disguising his deficiency as a draughtsman in black darkness and clothing the classical and Christian ideas and images in the observed appearance of his contemporaries. What we know of his life is mostly violent. He shocked his contemporaries and he can still shock us, not so much by his sex 'n' violence subject-matter or his shotgun marriage of the naturalistic with the idealistic tradition as by the personal expressiveness of his art. 'Details are realistic; the whole is theatre', writes Professor Hibbard, but he then goes on to demonstrate that Caravaggio's theatre is for real. This licentious Bacchus, this headless Baptist, this sexually provocative angel, this writhing Christ, this dripping head of Goliath not only look like the inhabitants of Caravaggio's outer world, they are the inhabitants of his inner one.

Constable, like Caravaggio, hovers between objective description and manipulated meaning. Michael Rosenthal, in another of Yale's magnificently illustrated but cheaply priced monographs, makes an especially close investigation of the period between 1808 and 1821 (culminating in *The Hay Wain*), when Constable was evolving a true description of his home territory in Suffolk. Yet for all it was true, Rosenthal argues, and acutely observed with a genuine countryman's knowledge, it was also 'a landscape with value systems': Constable was the son of a prosperous mill-owner and farmer and the way he saw landscape was the way a late 18th-century farmer liked to see it, as a picture of industry and contentment, endorsing the society and constitution of a happy, unrevolutionary England. After 1822, as British society became more disturbed and Constable, the 'ultra-Tory', with it, his vision turned nostalgic and his paintings picturesque. This is the period of *The Cornfield*, which has so many errors from a countryman's point of view that Rosenthal suggests it might be 'an ironic landscape, one which the connoisseurs should like, because it contained so many references to other pictures'. During his last period, after the death of his wife and at the time of the 1832 Reform Bill, Constable was filled with despair – personal, political and artistic – expressed in the 'foreboding intensity' of *Hadleigh Castle* and 'the brooding 1831 *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows*'.

Rosenthal's writing tends to be repetitive, but his argument, reinforced with literary quotations and social history, is on the whole convincing if, especially in his separation of the 'picturesque' works from the 'true descriptions', a little too schematic. Certainly this is a true description of Constable, but only from one angle. Another Constable, creator of those monumental compositions and astonishing depths and textures, flashes out frequently from the illustrations though rarely from the text. □

FILMS
John Coleman

Star crazy

Come Back to the 5 and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean (18) *Lumière Cinema*
Breathless (18) *Leicester Square Theatre*
Staying Alive (PG) *Empire*

Robert Altman is back on peak form, and I don't just mean the form he displayed in *Nashville*. Good grief, the man has made more fine movies than any other American director over the past 15 years; and they have been a varied enough bunch (*McCabe and Mrs Miller, Thieves Like Us, A Wedding* are my favourites) to give the lie to a division which would offer him as simply alternating between the big-canvas, multi-charactered, near-aleatory occasions and such off-beat and 'arty' events as *Images, Three Women*

Craig Raine

The gift

Had a secret hinge, was scented
with sandalwood from Lebanon,
was 'a gift for a wedding',
was an ordinary gift
yet contained all our life.

Intricate with images,
it cried *behold*:
behold this thaw of goats
on the Caucasus, behold
the carpetbagger bees

caught up in their gold rush,
the ejaculate salmon
and the heliograph sea.
The gift held everything
we once had owned:

Kiev, her winter windows
like a photographic album
with simple mounts of snow,
a curtain call of flowers
for sale at every corner,

a grand piano which rested
its head in its hand,
listening to Mozart
when lamps were lit
and the samovar brought.

And memories like pain
still sulking in a finger joint:
the German shower set
curled in the bath
like a flugelhorn,

our pencilled heights
on the nursery door,
a shoal of two-inch nails
that shone in the cellar
under the stairs.

The gift was everything
and everything in gold.
But we showed the box,
its clever carvings,
and lifted the lid on emptiness.

A gift for a wedding,
a wedding close to the frontier,
our guide explained,
pausing to spit,
when the soldiers pressed.

Yes, they said, we understand.
This watch is gold?
Later you claim this watch
on your way from the wedding.
Now, where are your papers?

The papers we carried
were the old big bank notes
that folded in four.
My father's wallet had a thong
and opened like a triptych

from Kiev to Khotin,
until we took that train
with all its windows broken
which brough us to Cracow.
Where my father shaved

in a bowl of hot water
while mother recited *Onegin*,
where we sat down at table
to the gifts of the gift:
soup and sausage and bread.

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and *Quintet*. There are – in the best sense – several Altmans: he is not just an artist but a craftsman too, who can turn his highly skilled attentions to all manner of subjects. Cries of 'auteur, auteur!' serve rather to strap him into a critic's straitjacket, diminish his hit-or-miss multifariousness. Time to call to the stand the splendidly risky **Come Back to the 5 and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean,** whose title alone might have put off lesser men.

In fact, it nearly threw Altman when he was sent a copy of Ed Graczyk's off-off-Broadway play. Next thing he was directing the preposterous affair *on* Broadway, then turning it – from Graczyk's script – into a single-set, $800,000 movie shot in Super 16 and using stars from the stage cast. I said 'preposterous' because any synopsis of this claustrophobic reunion of a group of five women, remaining Disciples of James Dean, in a remote Texan Woolworth's store in 1975, 20 years to the day after their idol's death, is going to sound like Tennessee Williams depending heavily on the kindness of strangers. By the close, when Mona (Sandy Dennis), Sissy (Cher) and Joanne (Karen Black) dance-mime a last McGuire Sisters number, everyone has lost an illusion, all masks are off; and yet the effect is tenderly upbeat, more than a *danse macabre* of uncupboarded skeletons, even if the absolute end has the camera traversing a store now abandoned, derelict.

Using the long mirror behind the counter (a reverse replica set was built on the other side) for time-travel, Altman commutes brilliantly between past events clustered around that historic night when Mona, an extra on *Giant*, was supposedly impregnated by James Dean – subsequently giving birth to the never-seen Jimmy of the title, a 'moron' she says – and current revelations. A young homosexual store-sweeper, Joe, long ago raped and hounded from town, is glimpsed in that flashback mirror, the only male to show and briefly at that. Sandy Dennis's famed leporine mannerisms, stutteringly perfect for obsessed, humourless, high-faluting Mona, living a lie, are wickedly mimicked for a second by Cher's raunchy, sleep-around Sissy, still working at the store and hugging her own sad secret to a proud bosom. Apart from the old storekeeper, Biblically blind to her dead husband's alcoholism, there's an ill-assorted couple of reunionists, a mousy mother of six carrying her seventh and a childless loudmouth, wife of a millionaire. On to this scene, into the 5-and-dime crammed with mementoes of Dean comes glamorous, mystery visitor Joanne, Karen Black pulling out all the stops.

Technical expertise to one side, and there's an audacious amount of that, Altman has probably never got better ensemble playing than from this small, deliberately set-bound posse of pained women. Even the mouse (Marta Heflin) has her snapping moment. But the supreme achievement of a film available for all kinds of critical exegetics around the theme of 'illusion' – and, more particularly, on the perils of star-mania – is the aeration the director introduces throughout, just when emotional suffocation and even absurdity threaten. Those McGuire Sisters oldies on the soundtrack are a big help, but it is the quick, raw gusts of humour and sudden lulls into mutual sympathy that break up – with beautiful timing – what otherwise might have been the heaviest of weather.

Jim McBride's 're-make' of *A bout de souffle* may have Godard's blessing and, in a garishly coloured fashion, it does transplant a lot of the incidents of the *nouvelle vague* original to Las Vegas and Los Angeles, as well as a few of the character's names (cutely, Belmondo's Poiccard becomes the moniker of Monica, played by Valerie Kaprisky in the sort-of-Seberg role). This **Breathless,** though, is strictly the New Vague, a borrowed vehicle featuring numerous stolen vehicles driven hither and yon by the only conceivable selling-point of the exercise, Richard Gere. For Gere-fanciers, here he is, often naked and invited to smirk into the camera as if he were giving a stunning performance instead of scurrying through as a small-time criminal shit. This is the nadir of superstardom, with Gere sold like a piece of meat. To save time, we may as well append Sylvester Stallone's **Staying Alive** here, in which John Travolta suffers a like fate. Six years from *Saturday Night Fever,* the rippling torso of Travolta as Tony Manero has graduated to Manhattan and – via loose plot motions – a lead dance role in the least plausible Broadway musical you ever saw. Not that you do see it, other than in hysterically cut fragments of futile energy. Fortissimo music submerges most of the dialogue, but Travolta preens, Travolta turns on the boyish charm as another see-through cad, and finally Travolta STRUTS. Wow. A newish-style Disney, **Something Wicked This Way Comes** (PG – Odeon, Haymarket), must wait till next week. □

THEATRE
Joyce McMillan

Hanging on

Jamie the Saxt
ROBERT McLELLAN *Pitlochry until 1 October; on tour in Scotland until mid-November.*
Macbeth
SHAKESPEARE *Pitlochry until 1 October; on tour in Scotland until mid-November.*

Any organisation which labels itself 'The Scottish Theatre Company' is asking for trouble, and the STC has certainly seen plenty of that since it was launched in 1981. It's the sort of name that creates expectations; it's hardly surprising that the time-honoured phrase 'Scottish National Theatre' was dusted off and bandied about in connection with this new company. Deny the title as it might, the STC had saddled itself right from the start with the assumption that it would mount big, conventional-looking productions of the highest professional standard, that it would fill big auditoriums all over the country, and that it would, in passing, play a major role in revitalising Scottish culture, preserving the Scots language, and keeping Scotland's large and plaintive fraternity of playwrights in gainful employment. Predictably, it became obvious within a few months that the company had neither the financial resources nor, perhaps as a result, the calibre of artistic direction to achieve anything of the kind.

Two and a half years on, the STC has been relaunched under the temporary guidance of Tom Fleming. Fleming has done his best to loosen the company's remit and broaden its horizons, talking enthusiastically about the need for a major Scottish company tackling an international classic repertoire; but the briefest of glances at his two current productions shows that the company is still wrestling with exactly the same problems which almost scuppered it last year – the same chronic mismatch between the ambitious, conventional and fairly rigid role envisaged for it, and a level of funding more approrpiate to a medium-scale, informal and flexible touring operation.

Predictably, then, the company's choice of productions for this autumn season has all the hallmarks of timid expediency rather than genuine artistic enthusiasm. **Jamie the Saxt** – a sprightly and intricate comedy, dating from the late 1940s, about life at the Edinburgh court of the young King James VI before he became James I of England – was a roaring box-office success last summer, and was presumably chosen for production in the first place for the quasi-political reason that it is one of the few really attractive texts written in classic broad Scots.

Macbeth, similarly, is a guaranteed crowd-puller; and its Scottish setting also provides some justification – as if any were needed – for the actors to use their natural Scottish accents. At any rate, whatever the motivation behind the choice of play, neither production has the purposeful quality – the strong sense of exactly why this play should be of interest to a contemporary audience – that characterises really memorable revivals; and the vagueness of focus in the productions isn't helped by some rather clumsy attempts to draw thematic parallels between the two plays.

Unfortunately, though, McLellan's play has really almost nothing to do with those themes. It masquerades cheerfully enough as a detailed historical drama about the young James's tussle for power with his unruly lords and divines, but what it actually amounts to is a jolly 20th-century cultural fantasy about life in a small and independent Scotland, where the young Danish queen struggles manfully to grasp the intricacies of the Scots language, where Cockney spies are laughed out of court for their incomprehensible accents, and where Edinburgh matrons feel free to poke the King in the ribs and offer him bowls of cock-a-leekie soup.

It's the clarity with which McLellan realises this rosy vision of a free, unselfconscious and culturally cohesive

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Scotland that makes *Jamie* an interesting play for modern Scottish audiences; it's certainly the cultural and linguistic jokes and observations which draw the warmest response from them. But Tom Fleming has done nothing to explore the contrast between McLellan's Utopian image of old Scotland and the continuing dreary inferiority complex that characterises Scottish cultural life now. And he certainly hasn't used the experience of working on McLellan's play to throw new light on *Macbeth*.

The *Macbeth* is, in fact, an aimless production. Mark McManus gives a most peculiar performance as Macbeth, growling and histrionic to the point of absurdity; and the rest of the production often resembles nothing so much as a poorish school Shakespeare. All the same, there is a kind of crude electricity about it; speaking the lines in Scots accents, the actors seem to be looking at the poetry for the first time, approaching it with a fresh and detailed understanding that's attractive and even, at odd moments, exciting. Perhaps the best one can say for this *Macbeth* is that there's nothing closed, finished or self-satisfied about it; and in its openness and rawness there's endless potential for growth and improvement.

That shouldn't, in the end, be a particularly devastating criticism of a company as young as the revamped STC: in the process of finding a new style, a new company, a new Scottish voice in which to tackle the classics, there are bound to be embarrassing moments, outright failures, and occasional excruciating productions. But the STC's recurring problem is that it has no time to learn from its mistakes. If the audiences fail to materialise, the company may disappear for good next month or the month after. To build a big, new, creative company at this level of professional theatre demands a perspective that runs into years rather than weeks; but it seems that time is the one indulgence no one can afford to buy – even for the nearest thing Scotland has to a national theatre company. □

We apologise for the syntactical chaos of Stephen Brook's theatre column last week – our fault, not his.

Among this week's contributors:

PAUL ADDISON is a Reader in History at Edinburgh University and author of *The Road to 1945* (Cape, 1975).

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS is Washington correspondent of *The Nation*.

KATHY O'SHAUGHNESSY is assistant editor of *The Literary Review*.

JEREMY LEWIS is a director of Chatto & Windus.

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OPERA
Andrew Clements

Spells

The Nightingale/L'Enfant et les sortilèges
Covent Garden
Lulu
Covent Garden

The first new production of the Royal Opera's season is in fact second hand, a double bill of Stravinsky and Ravel borrowed from the Metropolitan Opera in New York. There each opera was part of a triple bill: *The Nightingale* was combined with *The Rite of Spring* and *Oedipus Rex* for a Stravinsky evening; *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* followed Satie's *Parade* and Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. The common bond between the two sets of stagings was John Dexter's production and David Hockney's designs, though both operas have acquired predominantly British casts for their importation.

Stravinsky's **Nightingale** is superficially less of a problem on stage than the magical transformations of the Ravel. But the essentially static nature of the action and the necessity of at least some choreography (for the character of the Nightingale) makes for an awkward hybrid. Dexter's solution indulges the balletic element overmuch; Frederick Ashton includes not just the Nightingale but also the Fisherman in his scheme of things, introducing a spurious relationship between the two that clouds the simple outlines of the Hans Andersen fable. For all the beauty of the dancing (Anthony Dowell and Natalia Makarova here) it gets in the way, and more critically encourages Dexter to play fast and loose with the basic elements of the story. The endings of both second and third acts are reworked: in the first case this merely confuses, in the second it positively reduces the impact of the final moments, in an opera already short on well focused drama. David Atherton conducts a lucid if sometimes prosaic account of the score; Phyllis Bryn-Julson is a pure-toned lyrical Nightingale, Philip Langridge an efficient Fisherman, the pair of them singing from the sides of the apron while their other halves dominate the stage.

At least when nothing much is happening the opera is good to look at, bedecked in shades of blue with brilliant red reserved for a stunning effect on the entry of the Japanese with the mechanical nightingale. In **L'Enfant** also Hockney conjures some magical pictures, chock full of references to famous designs of past eras, with bold primary colours to contrast with the manifold subtleties and half shades of Ravel's orchestration. Once again, however, Dexter fails to deliver equally clean-cut direction. Faced with the problem of singing teapots and grandfather clocks, he elects to have the roles sung from the sides of the stage while children are left to enact the drama. So far so good. But the Child himself must obviously appear with the characters, and some of the other roles do not pose any real problems of costume. The result is an unsatisfying mish-mash of onstage and offstage singing, of doublings and non-doublings. More seriously still, the idea of cosy enchantment that this production generates is quite alien to the nature of Colette's libretto; Ravel's idea of childhood was not at all cosy, and one of the fascinations of his best music – the two operas and the two piano concertos – is the way in which sentimentality is perpetually soured by nightmarish terror. There is nothing remotely frightening when the objects come to life here; the 'spells' of the title are utterly benign. What is essentially a profound exploration of childish fears is reduced to the level of an engaging pantomime; the final chorus is sickeningly trite.

Nor I regret to say is it redeemed by the musical contribution. Ravel's score demands a virtuoso orchestra of tingling responses, and on this form the Covent Garden band is not that. Too much of the singing also is routine, and occasionally too sloppy to be passed off even as routine, though Anne Murray as the child is nicely gauche within the constraints of the production and sings with stylishness and clarity. But at least admirers of Hockney will not be disappointed by what they see.

Back in the repertory at the Royal Opera House two and a half years after its première is Götz Friedrich's production of *Lulu*. The revival is significantly more successful than the first run; there is still a crucial weakness in the conception of the title role but almost every other part is taken now with vividness and complete assurance. Gunther Reich (Schoen), Ryszard Karczykowski (Alwa) and Erik Saedén (Schigolch) have markedly intensified their performances, and Reich in particular seems to me almost beyond criticism. Brigitte Fassbaender's Countess Beschwitz is the newcomer among the principals, and her distinctive vocal tang and authoritative stage presence have become one of the strengths of the evening. The lesbian Geschwitz is now the entirely sympathetic, utterly selfless character Berg intended. *Lulu* is an opera about human weakness and should arouse compassion in its audience as much as it shocks and amuses, and Miss Fassbaender restores that vital dimension to Friedrich's staging.

Karen Armstrong's Lulu continues to be the major disappointment. Memory suggests she sings the cruelly taxing part more accurately than before, albeit at some cost to sheer intensity, but her conception of Lulu's character is still entirely misplaced and if anything has become more blowsy and coarse-grained. She plays the Lulu of popular operatic mythology, knowing and devious, rather than the helpless, innocent creature Berg portrayed; she is predator rather than prey. Yet the musical virtues of the performance are more than sufficient to overshadow these deficiencies and the series of minor irritations in the production itself. Colin Davis has taken the score to his heart; he conducts a splendidly paced account,

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richly detailed, with fine playing from the Covent Garden orchestra. Ensembles and set pieces are delivered with great élan. Davis leaves no doubt that this is the greatest opera of the century; those empty seats on the first night must be filled for remaining performances. □

TELEVISION
Hugo Williams

Camera lucida

IT WAS INTERESTING to hear Mrs Wilkins (**The Family,** BBC-2) express the view that she and her family were *portraying* ordinary people in that 1974 piece of *cinéma-vérité*. They looked exceptional enough to me, which is how they managed it. Any attempt to capture ordinariness, except by extreme art, is not a good idea. President Mitterand helped the French use less TV with his introduction of the '*téléfilm*'. These are dead areas of the night in which actors portray ordinary families being ordinary – except that, unlike ordinary families, they never do anything extraordinary. A sample *téléfilm* might hinge on the unexpected arrival of a neighbour with toothache: whether to take an aspirin now, or go straight to the dentist? A third alternative might involve mass euthanasia of the cast, and this seems to be the *dénouement* provided by most French households: a discerning darkness.

Last week there was a middle-brow, access equivalent of the *téléfilm*, entitled **About Men . . . And Women** (C4). How neatly those three dots captured the bathos and anti-climax of what followed. 'The programme features a group of men in Coventry, in discussion and in their daily lives with other men, with children and with women', went the go-away; 'the first programme concentrates on the relationships between men and women and the problems brought about by the burdens of men's image of who they think they ought to be and what they believe their role . . . etc, etc. For a booklet, send £1 to . . .' In all honesty, I can't recommend the booklet. Folks are decent up Coventry way and disinclined to air their dirty linen in public, let alone on telly. 'You know I like you to go out one evening a week with Angela and Wendy', said a decent young chap decently to his wife, when what we wanted to know was how he would feel if she went out every night of the week with Johnnie and Dickie. It was like watching *Candid Camera* after the cameras have been revealed.

Hugh Greene, who presided over the BBC-TV's so-called golden age (the Sixties) voiced the opinion recently that there are 'too many programmes about cancer and kidney disease and the troubles of social workers in Salford'. It would be nice to agree with him if his views weren't so obviously coloured by self-esteem. 'We were absolutely in touch with the climate of opinon', he boasted of his period; 'perhaps we were just a butterfly that had our 24 hours of life and that was that.' To imagine the world going down a long slide endlessly is a view which might make one's own death seem less grotesque, I suppose, along the lines of 'when I go, it all goes', but surely he can still dig *Hi-De-Hi*? He was right about one thing: 'Four channels is too many'.

BY EXTREME contrast, **Dying of Shame** (C4) had everything a Sunday paper reader could desire, even that punny title. The show itself wasn't so amusing. In certain mad Middle East countries like Syria and Iraq, which can't be specified for fear of jeopardising escape routes from them, they have the endearing practice of 'honour-killing': 'My mother was burnt to death', said a young woman. 'It was my father. *Un homme très jaloux.*' One young man went to ask for a girl's hand, but when the father understood that they knew each other he denied having a daughter. He went to wake her up, told her to follow him, and threw her down a well. He got 20 years for murder. Linda's parents cut off her hair and beat her feet for smoking. A country girl had a four-kilo tumour removed from her side. The surgeon gave it to her mother so she could prove her daughter's purity to the villagers. She wrapped it in a cloth and carried it triumphantly into the village on her head crying, 'See, my daughter is pure!' The villagers only saw it as proof of her guilt. The mother returned to the hospital with poison to save her daughter from being stoned.

'When they are told they can escape', said Jean-François Froger of the 'Sentinel' organisation, based in Lausanne, 'they say yes, yes, but they can't settle down. They can't read or write. They want to go back. *Il faut beaucoup de patience.*' Sentinel are trying to get the word 'Sex' added to 'Race' and 'Religion' on the Refugee Convention of the United Nations. The trouble is that these honour murderers, though acting outside their country's laws, do so within their country's cultural traditions (as such) and proving their actions 'sexist' or infringements of international civil rights is hard, even if you can prove they happened, particularly since the General Convention was drafted by men for men.

There are other forms of cultural murder. **Costakis the Collector** (C4) was a good little film which I saw again the next day at the opening of Costakis' collection of Russian avant-garde art at the Royal Academy, or the 20% of it the Russians let him leave the country with. Under Lenin and Stalin, this revolutionary stuff was banned in favour of Social Realism. When Costakis started saving it from the demoralised artists' stoves his actions were seen as provocative; but his Greek passport and job as a chauffeur at the Canadian Embassy gave him a kind of immunity. The film didn't explain how this loveable, art-loving Greek came to be in Moscow in the first place. If I'd been Stalin, that's the first thing I'd have wanted to know; but probably he did. □

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2789 **Set by P. W.R. Foot**

An exercise in rhyming slang about any incident likely to happen to a current celebrity. As a reminder:

I was out one night on the strict teetote,
'Cause I couldn't afford a drain;
I was wearing a leaky I'm afloat,
And it started to France and Spain . . .

Limit 16 lines, by 7 October.

No 2786 **Set by D. C. A. Bradshaw**

Banal or jejune single-sentence slogans for the Wayside Pulpit.

Report **By Al Dente**

Hard to improve on the real thing, of course ('A misery missed is a blessing to be counted' was the example we cited). It's a wonder that more vicars – since I assume that they write the bally things – haven't been done for incitement to suicide. Perhaps they have some ecclesiastical equivalent of diplomatic immunity. Anyway, a quid a slogan seems fair for the gloomily righteous samples below.

Born to a death sentence, be re-born to a life sentence.
How about sharing your solitary misery with us?
MICHAEL RUBINSTEIN

A little smileage goes a very long way.
Despair is only a giant to the pygmy-hearted.
MARTIN FAGG

Only those who've been in the rough can appreciate the fairway.
Go in off God and snooker the Devil.
RUFUS STONE

Be thankful for having something to be thankful for.
We know God knows we love him and he knows we know.
KEN RUDGE

Even an empty life is full of opportunity.
ROY KELLY

The closer to the grave, the nearer to heaven.
GERARD BENSON

Real joy gives greater pleasure than having fun.
The church is a laundry for soiled souls.
There's always an IF in the middle of LIFE.
You can't save time in a bank, so spend it wisely.
V. ERNEST COX

Consider whose hand is truly on your steering wheel.
There is hope for all but the hopeless.
The treasures of Heaven are paid for on Earth.
WILL BELLENGER

When disaster strikes, take comfort in others' pleasures.
Your loneliness is only one drop in the world's ocean of troubles.
MICHAEL ROSEN

Drop in here for a prayer today, as you may not be here tomorrow.
E. O. PARROTT

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FIRST PERSON

Bill Greenwell

Famous last words

WHEN WILLIAM PITT the Younger was sinking into his final pillow, he is credited – debited? – with these last, gasping words: 'My country! Ah, how I love my country'. Or so say the O-level history books. Or so say some of them. Sometimes he is leaving his country, rather than loving it, which might make a difference if you were scripting a bio-pic, presumably to be called *Pitt – the Sequel* or plain *Pitt Two,* and wanting to give the audience something to muse upon as the credits – debits? – rolled.

Of course, the good history books have an asterisk at this point, and an NB to the effect that he may actually have said something different. The alternative version is: 'I think I could eat one of Bellamy's veal pies'. Actually, my own primer gave this alternative to Palmerston, but the *ODB* is pretty insistent about Pitt, so we'll stick with it. History would not be history if they could agree about it.

The Bellamy in question was the purveyor of spanking patisserie to parliamentarians, and that an expiring ex-premier should be talking of tucking in just as he was finally being tucked up seems to be impressively probable. The subject of food is nevertheless a good one to have on your lips. For one thing it stops you eating, which is in my case a matter of some urgency. Until comparatively recently I had not run to fat – to seed, yes, because it's cheaper. As a teenager I was an animated Twiglet, and my ribs were visibly ready for tickling. Of late, alas, my girth has been the subject of mirth, the second of my vital statistics having taken on the others with a vengeance. During the recent imminence of the infant Greenwell a daily bantering took place, most of it along the lines of 'When's it due?', shifting in Month 10 to the equally jolly 'I thought you'd had it.'

Nothing to be done: I made for a weigh-in at Woolworth's. Five penn'orth to see how far a needle will flick. It hit 14 stone. I am not proud, and I am glad they have abolished speak-your-weight affairs.

My eyes fell from the scales.

When you have acquired four stones in eight years, you find yourself slinking along to the Slimming section in the mag racks (there's a fair range between *Sanity* and the *Spectator).* But there is a greater safety in fashion, and I plumped for *The F-Plan,* something of a bestseller, and written by Audrey Eyton. The theory is easy to digest. You abandon the piggery to swallow the pearl cast before you, namely, that everything you eat should have plenty of *dietary fibre,* the more the better, and 1500 calories is your lot. Dietary fibre is roughage, roughly, and it drops through your system like a stone, or four if you stick at it.

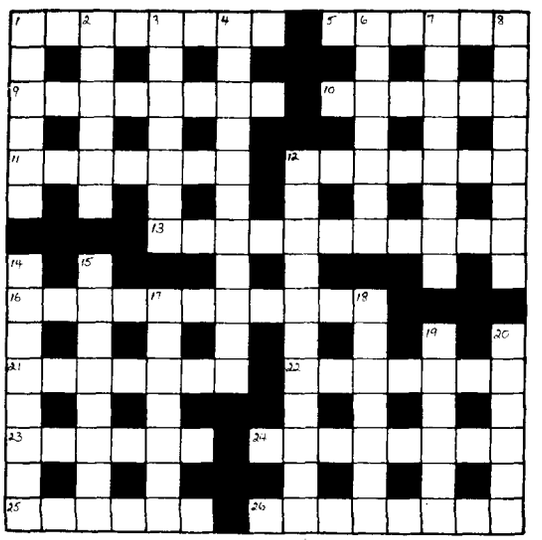
Take almonds. Half a pound a day and you'd have hit the F-target. But since I don't like almonds, and only a masochist would chomp nothing but almonds, the sensible alternative offered you is a daily dose of *fibre-filler* and, unless you're a gourmet, all the baked beans you can manage in the evening. *Fibre-filler* is, to a starch addict like myself, to an unhealthy slob who licks the crisp-packet and fingers the fridge-door with infinite tenderness, a nightmare. It is bran, it is bran flakes, it is bran buds, it is (and here the memories of Molesworth come balefully back) prunes.

I have had to practise sleepwalking in the morning to stick to the schedule. I have learned to read the small print on cans of cat-food and on light-bulbs. I have even listened assiduously to *Thought for the Day.* It has been a shocking business, but by golly (not as in the forbidden fruit of marmalade) the stuff fills you up. The hand that stretched for the multi-storey sandwich at midday is still; the fingers that finished the packet of frankfurters in a jiffy no longer twitch. I have acquired moral fibre. I have met my Waterloo.

And, some weeks and a little light cheating later, I have lost a stone. But oh the psychological sacrifice, the admission of guilt it has entailed! When Lord Palmerston lay at last on the lip of his life, and some wretched doctor lectured him, as doubtless he did, on the need to take it easy, no more of this Bellamy's-best business, I am confident his rejoinder was curt. The hack-happy quack has misrepresented him. What he actually said was: 'Diet, my dear doctor? That's the last thing I shall do!' □

Weekend Crossword 1415

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1415, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 11 October.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

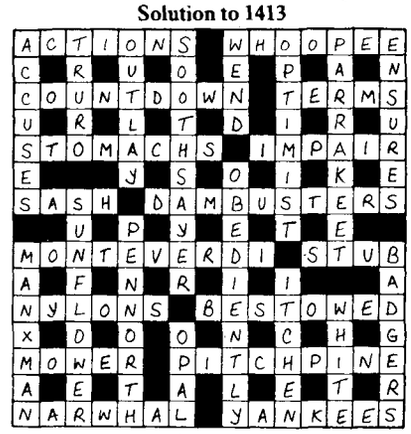
1. Don't be long, girl (8)
5. Illness in which operations have to take place, but not in damp conditions (6)
9. What is universal among those who are lost is improper treatment (8)
10. Again washes back but it is not popular when found in the bath (6)
11. Letter I preserve for one of refined taste (7)
12. Everything about one is taken in by George as a scientist (7)
13. Put me in the gap as a substitute (11)
16. Change about a hundred for the sake of argument (11)
21. Communication which may make it sleep (7)
22. Attribute to one being in tangled braces (7)
23. Have a purpose which is in the main tendentious (6)
24. One who takes the plunge with a man is led astray (8)
25. Place of retreat from danger (6)
26. An unwelcome visitor, I turn red in confusion (8)

DOWN

1. Full knocker (6)
2. Attack the extreme left (6)
3. He brings relief and is concerned with cures being distributed (7)
4. Consider going against the mould (11)
6. Rebuff makes the theatre employ about fifty (7)
7. Wasn't pedestrian but was boring after Edward left (8)
8. Town in which young men are about to prepare for battle (8;
12. Attraction between bodies when one is rotating freely around a girl (11)
14. Getting thinner like a ribbon placed on a hoop (8)
15. In this district erosion is more serious (8)
17. Regret about what sounds like night return train (7)
18. Kind of physics which makes Greek letter plain (7)
19. Matched with holes (6)
20. He wants to improve things and so makes people turn socialist (6)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1413



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Mr R. A. Dunn (Trowbridge)
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ATTRACTIVE GRADUATE woman teacher, 44, div, interests include homelife, music, travel, the countryside, tennis, seeks unattached, prof. man for friendship & companionship. London home. Box 6548.

ATTRACTIVE, PROFESSIONAL man, divorced, 58, wide interests including the arts, seeks attractive, warm-hearted, intelligent woman, any race, for friendship and common interests. Box 6504.

AUTHOR, 40s, single parent, North England, despairs finding attractive, intelligent, non-screwed up female. Hedonism and humour would help as would sensitivity. Letter or curare. Box 6553.

CHESHIRE/MERSEYSIDE: 42 year-old lecturer, (yes, another one!), reluctantly trying to come to terms with being gay, divorced, would like to make friends. Box 6556.

ATTRACTIVE, ADVENTUROUS, mature female desires presentable male companion, essentially healthy, active, unattached, tall, sixty-plus, cheerful, solvent, enthusiastic, with similar interests – travel, touring, exploring. Box 6560.

CEYLONESE EDITOR/Writer, 42, seeks tall, cultured, independent, unpretentious, warm, fun-loving female, 22-45, for no-strings steady relationship. Nationality, career, marital status immaterial. Box 6542.

CLASSICAL DANCE-teacher, BA(Hons), creative arts graduate, intellectual, 27, female, non-smoker, would like male companion for *cultural pursuits and friendship.* Box 6503.

DATELINE'S PSYCHOLOGICALLY accurate introductions lead to pleasant friendships, spontaneous affairs and firm, lasting relationships including marriage. All ages, all *areas. Free details: Dateline Computer Dating* Dept. (NT), 23 Abingdon Rd, London W8. Tel. 01-938 1011.

FRIENDLY, ATTRACTIVE female, 34, working, *sense of humour, wide interests, inc.* films, travel, food, football, seeks unattached male for friendship/partnership, London. Box 6547.

GENTLEMAN, 49, graduate, seeks permanent relationship with lady of character, preferably interested in classical music, art, dancing, home-life & London based. Box 6544.

GENTLEMAN, 44, divorced, sincere, presentable, 5ft 8in, creative, practicable, drives. Seeks genuine, *intelligent, solvent female, preferably* own accommodation. Independent status. For special relationship. London/SE. Box 6516.

HANDSOME, INTELLIGENT bachelor, late thirties, still shy, hopes attractive, older, elegant woman, can teach him some confidence. Sm. photo appreciated and returned. Box 6572.

HERTS-BASED male, fifties, slim, with sense of humour, enjoys music, reading, walking and occasional dance, seeks *friendship,* with sincere, caring female. Box 6539.

HUDDERSFIELD: tall woman graduate, quietish, leftish, 29, non-smoker, seeks warm friend, to explore countryside with, listen to jazz/blues with, talk, laugh, etc. Box 6554.

IMPERFECT, WAGNERITE male, 32, North *West, seeks female for friendship etc.* Any offers? Box 6562.

LADY, 44, beautiful, educated, musical, unconventional, seeks attractive male, share outings, fun, affection, travel. Box 6585.

LAWYER, LATE forties, seeks younger, profes*sional girl for wining, dining and a close* relationship. Own flat by Clapham South station. Box 6540.

LONDONER, 45, once-married, who knows his own mind; who enjoys Mozart operas and Bach; who finds intellect aphrodisiac: seeks suitably articulate, childfree woman. Box 6563.

MALE GRADUATE, 49, would like to meet affluent, benevolent female for occasional days out in London. Interests: climbing, photography, music. Box 6543.

MA OR PHD man, over 40, wanted in Bristol radius, initially to go to Colston Hall Symphony concerts with me. Box 6587.

MISSING MALE Company, attractive, professional woman, 51, not socialist, understanding, good listener, Hampshire (have car, could travel) seeks non-sexist, educated, *widower/divorce,* 54-56. Box 6561.

MODERN LANGUAGE Teacher in South West, seeks new man in her life, over 35. Box £571.

NON AFFLUENT, but world travelled male, re*tired, Anglesey home, seeks woman com*panion, *non-smoker, intellectual, placid, lively* curiosity, but content with quiet ambiance, reliable. Box 6489.

OLDISH MALE, active socialist, needs affectionate, warm-hearted, mature female friend, for theatre, concerts. West London. Box 6566.

OPEN-MINDED ABOUT allocating proceeds from selling house, fraternally disposed Humanist, Guru-vintage, favouring Alternative movement, seeks equally team-spirited damsel. Box 6589.

POLY LECTURER, female, 28, seeks rescue from materialism and loneliness by male correspondent, London area, to share interests in poetry, history, literature, exciting discussions. Box 6573.

PRACTICAL YET sensitive, retired, non-smoking male teacher. Norwich-based, separated, presentable, seeks long-term relationship, with affectionate, intellectual female. Box 6549.

PROFESSIONAL MAN, 44, married but lonely, seeks woman friend, share kindness, warmth, understanding, offers shoulder to cry on if needed. London area. Box 6581.

PROFESSIONAL MALE, 31, separated, living London, would like to meet intelligent woman, non-smoking, under 40, to share enjoyment of life. Box 6584.

PROF. LADY, rather reluctant career person, *late 30s, short, unattached, no ties, interested* people and ideas, wishes to meet compatible male, North of England. Box 6507.

PROF. WOMAN, 32, interested music, theatre, film, walking, people and cooking, seeks friendly, sympathetic male, vegetarian, non-smoker preferred. S. Yorkshire area. Box 6586.

TALL, ATTRACTIVE, professional gentleman, widowed, many interests, happy and considerate, seeking romance and good times with *attractive lady, up to 47. Herts and London.* Box 6578.

TALL, BLACK, attractive, professional lady, 39, desires to meet tall, intelligent, caring, sincere and serious-minded gentleman, 39-42, with various interests, nationality unimportant. Box 6524.

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EVENTS

AUCTION SALE in aid of European Nuclear Disarmament. 1 October, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. Viewing 2 p.m. Sale begins 3.15 prompt. Admission by catalogue at door 50p. Items include autographs, inscribed books and records, paintings, World War I postcards, je*wellry, silver and other collectors' items and* bric-a-brac. Contributions welcomed on the day or beforehand at END, 227 Seven Sisters Road, N4.

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Application form and further details from: The Recruitment and Personnel Officer, Comprehensive Housing Service, 13-27 Station Road, Wood Green, London N22. Tel: 01-889 5815 (24-hour answering service) or 01-881 3000, ext. 3033. Closing date: 7 October 1983

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CROYDON TRADE UNION COUNCIL is establishing a trade union support unit in the London Borough of Croydon. Initially funded for one year by the GLC. To provide information, research, back-up facilities to local workers, and to promote the development of trade unionism in the area. We need three members of staff who will have overlapping responsibilities. All will have a proven commitment to the Labour Movement. For job descriptions, details of salaries, and application form, write to: Peter Spalding, CTUSU, 90 Ruskin House, Coombe Road, Croydon, Surrey, or tel: 01-684 4907. Closing date 14 October 1983. The unit is an equal opportunities employer.

OV SELECTION CATERS for the more mature person as well as graduates and 'A' level students with typing and office skills. Phone Odette Veazey, OV Selection (Emp. Agy.) Abford House, 15 Wilton Road, London, SW1V 1LT. 01-828 8345.

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LISTINGS

THURS 22 SEPTEMBER

LONDON Open forum on Rail Transport of Nuclear Waste through West London. Spkrs from NUR, GLC, CND. Exhibition, refreshments. Adm free. 7.30pm, Blythe Neighbourhood Centre, The Hall, 50 Milson Rd, W14. ***Disabled access please phone David Drabble 01-603 5869.***

LONDON Public Meeting 'Childcare in Camden', 7.30pm, Charlie Ratchford Centre, Belmont St, NW1. Creche, sign interpreter, access and toilets for disabled.

LONDON 'From defeat to Victory: Labour in the 1980s'. Spkrs, Tony Benn, Michael Meacher. 8pm, Hampstead Old Town Hall, Haverstock Hill, NW3. Adm by ticket only from **Hampstead and Highgate Labour Party, 37a Broadhurst Gdns, NW6.**

FRI 23 SEPTEMBER

LONDON Problems and Prospects of Nuclear Disarmament'. Discussion with scientists from 16 countries (UK, USSR, Australia, USA, E & W Europe). Chair Mike Pentz. 8pm, County Hall, SE1. **Details: Becky Miles SANA, 112 Newport Road, New Bradwell, Milton Keynes MK1 30M. 0908 321283.**

LONDON Beat the bomb with jazz/funk 'Fusion Plus' with Phillip Bent on flute. 8pm, George & Dragon, High St, Acton, W3. Adm £2/£1 concs. Disabled access but no disabled loo. **Details: Acton CND, Sandy Guthrie 01-993 3240.**

SAT 24 SEPTEMBER

STIRLING Meeting to discuss launch of new monthly paper of the Left in Scotland, 'Scottish Socialist'. 12.5pm Cowane Centre. **Details: Jean Mackenzie, 59 Durward Avenue, Glasgow G41 041-649 8958.**

LONDON Open University CND day school, 11am Parsifal College, Finchley Road. Spkrs, Workshops, films. Accom available. **Details: Chris Wharton, 76 Hackness Road, Scarborough.**

LEICESTER 'Childbirth Today'. Michel Odent – pioneer of active birth in France. 10-12.30pm, £5. **Org Leicester Active Birth Conf, 9 Cross Green, Rothley, Leicester. 0533 374285. ALSO 3pm at Ivanhoe College, Ashby.**

SUN 25 SEPTEMBER

LONDON Sixth Waltham Forest Festival for Racial Harmony. Musicians, dance & drama groups, stalls. National or fancy dress. 1.30-5.30pm, Lloyd Park, Forest Road, E17. Adm free. **Org Waltham Forest Campaign Against Racialism. Details 01-558 1992.**

MON 26 SEPTEMBER

LONDON Debates on Strategies for Socialism: family policy politics, parents and child care. Course start at Camden Inst., 87 Holmes Rd, NW5. **Details: 01-267 1414.**

TUES 27 SEPTEMBER

LONDON 'Futility of Civil Defence'. Meeting with Owen Greene of Open University. 8pm, Drake House, St George's Rd, Wimbledon, SW19. Adm free. **Org Wimbledon Disarmament Coalition.**

BIRMINGHAM Launch Conf. of the West Midlands Low Pay Unit. 2pm, County Hall, Birmingham. Spkrs: Neil Kinnock, Rodney Bickerstaffe, Jeff Rooker. Contributions from West Midlands' low paid workers. **Details: West Midlands Low Pay Unit 021 643 3972.**

LONDON 'Carry on helping OXFAM carry the can . . . Will YOU?' 1500 collectors needed for Oxfam London Flag Day Street Collection in aid of Disaster and Emergency Relief. **Phone 01-874 7335/01-348 4225 Oxfam, PO Box 3, 4 Replingham Rd, London SW18.**

LONDON Tribune Rally 'Put Socialism on the Agenda'. Spkrs: Eric Heffer MP, Jo Richardson MP, Tony Benn, Bob Wareing MP, Mandy Moore. Chair Chris Mullin. 7.30pm, Central Hall, Westminster.

WED 28 SEPTEMBER

LONDON Big Red Band. Socialist and feminist marching band needs musicians of any ability to help provide music for demonstrations, pickets, etc. Band practice at ILEA evening class, 7.30pm (starts today), Clissold Park School, Clissold Road, N16. **Details: Ben Crow 01-800 0325.**

BRISTOL Building an Irish Solidarity Movement. Spkrs from National BISM and Bristol Troops Out Movement. 7.45pm, Waggon and Horse, 38 Stapleton Road, Bristol.

LONDON 'A Nuclear-free Zone in the Balkans'. Spkr Kiril Shterev, the Bulgarian Ambassador. 5.30pm, St. James Church, Piccadilly. (Entrance 50p). **Org Dunamis, 197 Piccadilly, W1V 9LF. 01-437 6851.**

THURS 29 SEPTEMBER

LONDON 'Complete British withdrawal from Ireland'. Public meeting to build for 1st October National Demonstrations in London. Film 'The Patriot Game'. 7.30pm, John Barnes Library, Camden Road, N7. **Org North London Irish Solidarity Campaign, BM Box 4835, WC1 3XX.**

REIGATE 'Armaments – Peace or War?' first of 10 meetings led by Dr. R. Brownhill, 7.30-9.30pm, 6th Form College, Castleford Rd, Reigate. Org Reigate and Banstead AEI/Surrey University. **Details: Tony Gowan, Burgh Heath 59737.**

LONDON 'Stop the City' protest action against nuclear and non-nuclear war. Assembly points: steps of St Pauls', Finsbury Sq, Tower Hill, 6am-6pm. **Details: Dave 01-809 1346; Andrew 01-609 1852; Mike 01-348 2288.**

FORTHCOMING

1 OCT London Auction sale in aid of END. Viewing 2pm. Sale 3.15, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. Adm by catalogue at door, 50p. **Details: END, 227 Seven Sisters Rd, N4.**

1 OCT London Irish Solidarity Demo – Self-determination for the Irish people led by Wolfe Tone Republican Flute Band. Assemble 1pm, Bidborough St. 7.30pm Social Caxton House, St John's Way, Archway, N19. Music, refreshments, accommodation, creche.

1 OCT Battersea Skills Sharing day led by Dan Plesch, 9.30-6pm, Garfield Community Centre, Gardfield Rd (off Lavender Hill), SW11. £2/£1 unwaged incl. lunch, tea/coffee. **Org Battersea CND 01-228 5144.**

1 OCT Liverpool Health Fair. Exhibitions, videos, films, self-help groups. Adm free. 11-4pm. Friends Meeting House, Paradise Street. **Org *Socialist Health Assoc.* 051-722 9376.**

1 OCT London 'Nukespeak' – the manipulative power of the language of the nuclear age. Open meeting, 2.30pm, Peace Pledge Union, 6 Endsleigh St, WC1. Spkrs: Paul Chilton and Richard Keeble. **Org Peace Education Project 01-387 5501.**

1 OCT London CND Benefit – dancing, fun raffle. 8-11.30pm, Covent Garden Community Centre, Earlham St, WC2. Tickets £2.50/£1.75 unwaged at door or from London Region CND, 6 Endsleigh St, WC1 or CND bookshop, Seven Sisters Rd, N4.

1 OCT London AGM of Chile Committee for Human Rights, 11-6pm, Islington South Library Hall, 115 Essex Rd, N1. Spkrs incl. Lord Avebury, Stanley Clinton-Davis, Judith Astelarra. **Details: 01-837 7561.**

1 OCT Brighton SHA Fringe meeting at Labour Party Conf. 7.30pm, Goring Room, Bedford Hotel, Kings Rd, Brighton. Spkrs Terry Davis, MP Labour Party Spokesman on Health. David Blunkett, Leader of Sheffield City Council. Free and open to all.

1 OCT London 2-day NALGO Lesbian and Gay Conference. Hampden Centre, 80 Polygon Rd, NW1. Creche, wheelchair access. **Details from local NALGO branches or: Jackie Lewis 01-720 0220 ext. 497, John McKay 01-468 7071 ext. 19, Theresa Conway, 68 Tollington Way, N7.**

2 OCT London Irish Solidarity Conf. 9.15-5.30pm, Caxton House, St John's Way, Archway, N19. £2.50/£1 unwaged. **Org *1 October Mobilising* Comm. BM Box 4835, WC1N 3XX.**

2 OCT Brighton Consultation of Constituency Labour Parties, incl. workshops on: Fighting the European Election – Stuart Holland; Building Workplace Branches to Resist Tebbit – Ken Coates; Defending Local Democracy – David Blunkett. 9.30am-12.30 and 1.30-3.30pm, Brighton Technical College, Pelham St. **Details: Steering Committee, 143 Haddon Cres, Chilwell, Nottingham. 0602 708318.**

5 OCT Brighton END fringe meeting at Labour Party conf: 'A disarmament strategy for European socialist parties' with Mary Kaldor, Robin Cook MP, Mo Mowlam. 5.30pm, Royal Albion Hotel, Old Steine. **Org END 01-272 1236.**

Sorry, but we can't accept entries over the phone. Entries must be received by Friday preceding issue date. We reserve the right to exclude items without giving reasons and are not responsible for errors. Space is strictly limited so if you definitely want your item to appear, we suggest you book it as an ad. under the appropriate classified heading. See main heading for rates, etc.

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